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Further information can be obtained from the acting chairman of the Department of English Language and Literature, Prof. dr. H. Steinmetz, P.O. van Eyckhof 4, Leiden, Tel. 071-48333, ext. 7206.

**PLEASE NOTE GENERAL
VACANCIES APPOINTMENTS
APPEAR ON PAGE 99**

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LIBRARIAN

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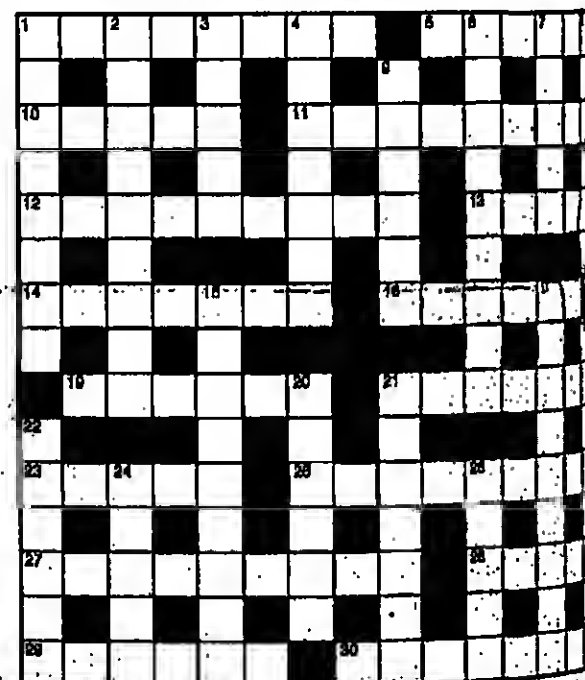
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TLS Crossword No 38

A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct solution. The crossword is published in the TLS Crossword No 37 is Margaret Tucker, 21 Bickenham Road, Kenilworth, Warwickshire CV8 2AB.



Across

- 1 Vicar's ordinary language going over the edge. (8)
- 2 Aim for something higher, a Goidel novel feature. (6)
- 3 Goidel century for dramatist. (5)
- 4 Lesser-known Kingsley story of Birdwood. (9)
- 5 One deludes Torquill and Neulis, children of nature. (9)
- 6 By no means aged Uncle Arly's feature. (5)
- 7 Marito Maripriest's not around! (7)
- 8 Limbless - one of the few sufferings not endured by this Mrs Booth. (6)
- 9 Offensive title of Sassoon poem. (6)
- 10 Norman border-lord or chief thrown in sea off Normandy. (7)
- 11 Mrs Bloss's maid, a child-martyr. (5)
- 12 Browning murder victim's in-born error. (9)
- 13 Summer-house likely to be raised or to be levelled into position. (9)
- 14 Roman writer Edmond is around in England. (5)
- 15 Poor tune to be sustained musically. (6)
- 16 Exultantly yelled at random. (8)

Down

- 1 Alias of Shirley's Lorenzo? (8)
- 2 The only means of strengthening [it] to make up one's mind about nothing. (Kears). (9)
- 3 His poisonous life coat. Ernest's coat. (9)

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FRIDAY 31 JANUARY 1986 No 4,322 80p

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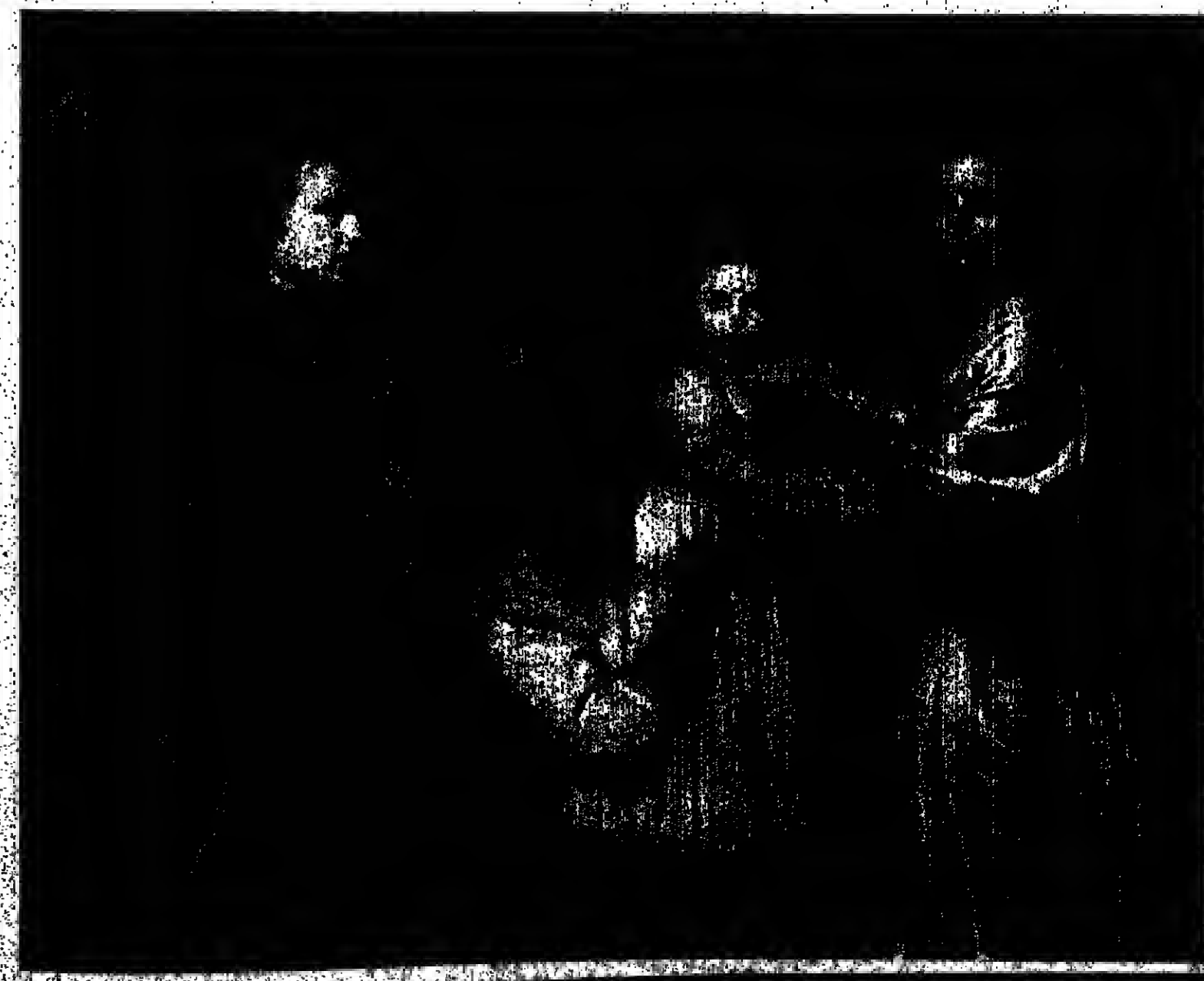
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The Times Literary Supplement

January 31 1986 Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX

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Cover picture Sir Joshua Reynolds's painting "George Clive with his Family and an Indian Mother" is on show at the Royal Academy in the exhibition Reynolds until March 31. It is reviewed on page 117.

The art of austerity

John Bayley

ZBIGNIEW HERBERT

Selected Poems

Translated by Czesław Miłosz and Peter Dale Scott
140pp. Manchester: Carcanet. Paperback, £4.95.

0 85635 543 7

Report from the Besieged City

Translated by John and Bogdana Carpenter
82pp. New York: The Ecco Press. \$12.50.
0 88001 071 1

In *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Milan Kundera imagines his fictions in terms of a metaphysics of history. Since nothing repeats itself, nothing really happens – if by "happening" we mean an event of permanent human significance, an event which causes us to weep or rejoice, to feel indignation and anger, as we do in response to the things that touch us nearly in our daily lives. A fiction can be imagined in terms of the German saying, *etwas ist keinmal*; what takes place is it has no reality, since what happens once has not happened at all. Hitler or Genghis Khan can kill as many people as they want: it is merely one more for the book, and a novelist can recreate in his own devices its lack of significance.

What about a poet? Poetry cannot sound like history. By its very nature it cannot say *etwas ist keinmal*: if it comes anywhere near doing this it ceases to be itself. Eliot comes dangerously near it in *The Waste Land* by his use of the word "unreal", arranged in a pattern of typographic isolation. It was modernism's gesture to the non-event of recent events, but fortunately the rest of the poem redeems this by its impenetrable singularity. Auden came close to it in "Spain", which is precariously saved by the authenticity of its parts and details, though the poem's facile proclamation of faith would otherwise be a particularly blatant acceptance of historical meaninglessness – meaninglessness in the form of Marxist "meaning". "Today the struggle", like "La lutte finale", is an especially insidious version of *etwas ist keinmal*.

In *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Kundera contrasts the state of total inner political cynicism to which people live in Eastern Europe, and which supplies the idea behind his title, with the weighty permanence of personal lives, the state of chance relations and events which has brought about commitment and

finality. His doomed couple – doomed by the meaningless fact of the fiction, but also, and savingly, by the inevitabilities of any individual life – live for each other and for their dog, who dies agonizingly of cancer. Dogs embody the heaviness of being, and its inescapability, like the pebbles in a poem of Zbigniew Herbert's. Dogs are also powerless, with that powerlessness which is the true fate of the single individual. So are poems, which, as Auden said, make nothing happen. Canetti, in his aphorisms, says that as long as there is one totally powerless person left in the world "I cannot lose all hope". That is both portentous and tiresome, but it links up with Tolstoy's curious observation that freedom consists "in my not having made the laws". The English fancy they are free, said Tolstoy, with that majestic cynicism which often characterized the old man, because they have made their own laws. "But I, in Russia, am truly free, because the laws have nothing whatever to do with me."

The relevance of all this for a poet like Zbigniew Herbert is that it stands on its head the Marxian commandment that freedom is the recognition of necessity. Politics can never recognize necessity; only powerlessness can do so. The paradox today is that this most politically aware poet is also the poet whose works most absolutely reject the unbearable lightness of the political. A. Alvarez, in his introduction to the Carcanet paperback reissue of Herbert's *Selected Poems*, stresses that this poetry is "unremittingly political", but he does not seem to have asked himself why this should be so, and on what contemporary central European paradox this unremittingness is founded. Alvarez makes a ritual contrast between the poets of the West, with their "cosy, domesticated, senselessly sensible way of life in a mass democracy", creating "worlds which are autonomous, internalized, complete inside their own heads", with the stark poetry of the East which is "continually exposed to the impersonal external pressures of politics and history". But such a contrast is all but meaningless except in so far as it reflects the pleasurable sense of guilt and self-accusation while some critics and commentators always express when implying that artists who have really been up against it must be politically *doux le vin*. All poets and their poetry are subject to the "impersonal external pressures of politics and history". The real contrast today is between those poets who have not made the laws, and those who have helped to do so, or are at least conditioned to feel that they have helped, and are

helping, *le de so*.

For the latter kind poetry can make things happen, in a modest way, like any other form of social action. The Ulster poets today write poems about the Irish situation which not only give it a new cultural status but arguably help to form new attitudes, at least among the small minority, perhaps mostly of students, who read them. Such poetry is itself a form of social and political discussion, in a sardonic and reasonable, and all the more effective in its moderate efficacy for not claiming too much. It may be on the side of what Alvarez calls a "cosy, domesticated, senselessly sensible way

of life", but it is certainly not "autonomous" and complete inside the poet's head: if it were it might, as poetry, have a greater impact. The autonomous and wholly personal idiom of Auden's early poems has, in retrospect, very much the air of belonging to a poet who has not made the laws, and who has the freedom that comes from being outside them. Yet Auden's idiom seemed precisely that of its age's political anxieties; and so today does Herbert's. Arguably the most "unremittingly" political poetry gets written by poets who are most detached, even – in the special way poets can be – indifferent. Only the powerless really reveal the nature of power; only the non-political

understand the nature of politics. This is shown by one of the most "unremitting" political poems ever written – Pushkin's *The Bronze Horseman* – and also by such poems of Herbert's as "Five Men" and "Preliminary Investigation of an Angel".

"Five Men" records the execution of the meo, presumably Poles, by a platoon of soldiers, presumably Germans. It refuses to be moved, or moved, and its weight falls on its two question and reply. what did the five talk of the night before the execution of prophetic dreams of an escape in a brothel of automobile parts of a sea voyage of how when he had spades he ought not to have opened of how vodka is best after wine you get a headache of girls of fruit of life

After this the poet does not have to answer his own question.

I did not learn this today I knew it before yesterday so why have I been writing unimportant poems on flowers

The question answers itself. The word "unimportant" disclaims any irony, just as the absence of punctuation – none of Herbert's poems is punctuated – turns all query into statement.

As the tone of "Five Men" resembles exactly the ending of *The Bronze Horseman*, so that of "Preliminary Investigation of an Angel" resembles the tone of Kafka. The angel sheds his angelic being as the investigation proceeds until from his hair "drops of wax run down / and shape on the floor / a simple prophecy". Angel and candle, points of lights, are intermetamorphosed, not by Kafka's nightmare but by the spoken and unspoken nature of Herbert's poetic language. Herbert's detachment is of the kind that takes a lot for granted: there is no point in going on about the nature of things. The last poem in the Carcanet selection, "Why the Classics", tacitly but significantly takes Thucydides for the poet's hero, and in a scene for his model too. In the fourth book of his account of the Peloponnesian War, Thucydides refers briefly to his own minor unsuccessful military assignment to relieve the Athenian colony of Amphipolis before the Spartan general Brasidas got there. He made a quick



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winter passage with his seven ships but none the less arrived too late – an everyday sort of setback for a commander in a war which was fought with dogged persistence rather than strategic brilliance. Herbert is interested in the perfunctoriness with which Thucydides refers to the incident, and contrasts it with the memoirs of "generals of more recent wars" who belittle their colleagues and display everything to their own advantage. The lesson is for art.

If art for its subject will have a broken jar a small broken soul with a great self-pity

what will remain after we will be like lovers' weeping in a small dirty hotel when wall-paper dawns

"Classical" is the word most often used to describe Herbert's poetry, both in Poland and among readers who know his work in the West. The word is necessarily ambiguous. T. S. Eliot often appealed to the traditions of classicism, and implied, as did Ezra Pound in his way, that his own poetry endorsed them. But the interior of Eliot's poetry is deeply personal, full of romantic secrets and intimacies. These are notably lacking in Herbert. Not that Herbert is impersonal: he presents a Horatian simplicity and openness, a temperament like that of a traveller or classical scholar. His collection of essays on European cultural sites, *Barbarian in the Garden*, contains some of the best travel writing of our time, but is almost disappointing in the way it reveals nothing about the inner life or history of the man himself. One cannot imagine him writing a love poem, or investigating his emotion with the zestful precision of a Robert Graves. His poetry reveals sharply and by contrast how much modern poetry has come to depend on versions of self-pity, and on the way it feeds and builds up the individual interior of a poet's work.

This is not all gain where Herbert is concerned. His poetry can seem flat, formulaic and predictable. Even in the crisp and impeccable translations of Czesław Miłosz and Peter Dale Scott there is a certain sameness about the parallels along which each poem develops that may not show up in the variety and intimacy of the native tongue, where nuances of idiom and cadence would give it a specialness not available in English correspondence. As the translators point out, Herbert is not classical in the sense of using traditional metres or rhythms; his poetry is more like a spare form of conversation, obviously depending a good deal on word order and on the subtle use of cliché. Well-known poems like "Apollo and Marsyas" and "Elegy of Fortinbras" are so doubt much funnier in the original. In English they depend rather too much on the points they make. In "Apollo and Marsyas" the god of restraint,

proportion and clarity, having flayed the faun and cleaned his instrument, departs along "a gravel path hedged with box", leaving his skinless victim uttering one immense howl on a single note, perhaps a new kind of "concrete" poetry. The joke, at the expense both of classicism and of pop art, has a tenderness, but in English the message arrives without the full depth of its implication. No doubt the cruelty of art – even Herbert's own art – arises from the fact that in the very act of creation it necessarily separates itself from human suffering, which cries out from the force and nature of its whole body and blood, and is thus abhorrent to the "god with nerves of artificial fibre".

The impasse left on the English page has no doubt all sorts of sly entrances and exits on the Polish one. The same is probably true of "Elegy of Fortinbras". Fortinbras explains the needs of the world to the dead Hamlet, and tells him that "the rest is not silence but belongs to me".

I must also elaborate a better system of prisons since as you justly said Denmark is a prison I go to my affairs This night is born a star named Hamlet We shall never meet what I shall leave will not be worth a tragedy

On the face of it the poem has too much point to have a proper inside territory; but the contrast between the two characters may well have a greater significance in the original. Hamlet has understood the nature of action: he has in fact "understood", just as a poem does, but what Fortinbras says of Hamlet – "you knew no human thing you did not know even how to breathe" – is also true of a poem. And of a pebble, the subject of one of Herbert's most affectionate and pellucid little poems.

I feel a heavy remorse when I hold it to my hand and its noble body is permeated by false warmth

A brief preliminary note by the translators is oddly defensive, and yet makes a firm and just point:

Control, consciousness, honesty and sobriety are not always to be condemned, least of all when these are qualities of a poet who received a proper European education into horror and chaos. In these times rarely may become as much of a corrective to cynicism as the absurd was in an earlier era.

It is indeed a striking thing that so many European poets who when young went through the full terror of the last war have written in consequence a poetry of extreme simplicity and precision, avoiding any overt expression of emotion, and setting the highest value on the old artifices of logic and reason. Vaasko Pope in Serbia was one such, and Czesław Miłosz is himself another. Man in extremity does not imitate the abyss and its moppings and mowings, but strives rather to detach himself from its absurdity. And it is a paradox that the sort of sounds made by Marsyas proceed; in our day

and climate, not from anguish and loss of freedom and fatherland, but from the kinds of boredom and meaninglessness inherent in the affluent society. As Miłosz implies, being a Pole connects one, in an intimacy which is almost comfortable, to the unchanging horrors of history. The idea that we live in a very special time that calls for a very special art would cause a Pole to smile. For him it is always the mixture as before, so that the attitudes and practices of classicism represent no arbitrary whim on the part of the poet, but rather the most natural response in art to the imperatives of survival. Herbert's poetry lives in the flow of history, and among the artefacts of European culture, as naturally as a pebble in the bed of a stream.

Herbert's great-grandfather was English, and the bizarre coincidence of his name with that of two English poets sharpens the fact of his wholly European rather than Polish status. The family split into two branches, one Catholic and one Protestant, and Herbert's branch settled in Lvov, in the eastern marches, where Polish, Ukrainian and Jewish cultures made a richly cosmopolitan mix. The east has always been a fertile ground for Polish poetry. Mickiewicz came from Vilna, on the borders of Lithuania, as did Miłosz. Herbert's mother was Armenian; his father, a professor of economics, a practising Catholic; his grandmother Orthodox. "And, all around, evidence of Hasidic culture . . . hence my syncretic religion." Herbert's cousin, son of an Austrian general on the other side of the family, was one of the thousands of Polish officers murdered by the Russians at Katyn in 1940.

Paradoxically, this almost too nutritious background has probably been instrumental in producing the austerities of Herbert's verse. Instead of submerging itself in the past and in its milieu, with all the helplessness of which some modern poetry makes a virtue, Herbert's poetry detaches itself into a thinner air, almost that dimension of logic and mathematics in which recent Polish scholarship has specialised. Many of the poems in *Report from the Besieged City* employ a persona called Mr Cogito, a not altogether serious figure (sometimes he becomes "the suckling Cogito") who devotes himself none the less to some highly serious and abstract questions – on eschatology, autocracy, or death – varied by encounters with a monster who cannot be seen ("the proof of the existence of the monster / is its victims") or with Maria Rasputin, the historical daughter of that Siberian shaman who exercised his influence in imperial Petersburg.

Mr Cogito "would like to remain faithful / to uncertain clarity", and rejects "the artificial fires of poetry".

the piano at the top of the alps played false cooerls for him

he didn't appreciate labyrinth

first to Vienna, then to Düsseldorf, where he lives, bed-ridden since 1978, in the Nelly-Sachs-Haus. The white walls of the clinic enter this volume as the setting for the struggle between the nightmare and the unbroken will to transcend it.

Wider recognition first came with *36 Gerechte* (1967), the book in which the concern with the sufferings of the Jewish people is most explicit and most sustained; but the work of the following decade, culminating in the poems assembled in *Ich höre das Herz des Oleaners*, did not see any increase in the sharpness with which this concern is expressed, nor any of the insistence with which Celan preserved his bitterness ("Zähle mich zu den Mandeln"). This is surprising, because the time was ripe for it. German poetry of the late 1960s and early 70s was dominated by the younger poets committed to expressing themselves very directly about the contemporary social and political scene and the recent past. The preferred form was the long poem, which relied little on metaphor and showed positive distrust of natural imagery. Rose Ausländer's poetry, by contrast, lived on metaphor and is particularly rich in natural imagery; metaphor is explored intensively but all finally over a short line; the

the sphinx filled him with longing . . .

he odored tautologies explanations idem per idem

that a bird is a bird slavery means slavery a knife is a knife death remains death

Of course, poetry is always rejecting the device, and acquiring new ones. But Herbert is not just saying "My eyes are nothing like the sun"; his metaphors are precise and cryptographic. The "September 17" refers to the precise date of 1939 when the Russians invaded Poland, ten days after the German army struck in the west. But the date is only its precision in and for itself: the poem is the opposite of *eternal* as it is, the Poland invasion is invasion, a simple continuous fact, and as Pushkin put it more than a hundred years earlier and in eastern side: "The history of Poland is ought to be a disaster".

knight sleeping in the mountains continues so you will enter easily uninvited guest

Herbert is not in the least afraid of the platitude which goes with his simple metaphors; he is not afraid of the platitude which goes with his simple metaphors.

My defenceless country will admit you to give you a plot of land under a willow tree those who come after us will learn again the most difficult art the forgiveness of day

At the end of the book the title poem, from the Besieged City, explores the ground and reaches the same conclusion: that has none of the Milan Kundera's formulation but a great more good sense. Since the poet is bear arms

they gradually gave me the inferior me

I record I don't know for whom the history

all of this is rhonotanele I know I don't

Nothing can be less exciting than the siege, and once again the conclusion anyone might have expected.

cemeteries grow larger the number of

yet the defence continues it will continue and if the city falls yet a single man who he will carry the city within himself

he will be the City

Both in relation to Poland and to human large the meaning is as obvious as a sign but it carries its obviousness with it and delicacy which makes Herbert to and so individual a poet.

tic, formal closure decisive. However, cannot but sense a lack of immediacy. The definitely *Altenglisch*: landscape is a memory or a literary reference; muted; excitement is less prominent than Ignation. Many of the poems turn inward, process of creation itself; not so as to the legitimacy of a poetic response to persecution, exile and sickness, but to express the feeling common to many poets that a home is to be found only in

Mein Vaterland ist tot

Ich lebe in meinem Mutterland Wort

The words are frequently of lamentation is significant is the sudden turn the takes to assertion. In this Rose Ausländer is a palmetist, and like the greatest poets she has her own characteristic. Heine it was poem 137, in which even choly suddenly turns to murderous for Celan it was 102, with its self-evocation of the Temple ruins and pity to the stones and dust for Rose it is 84, the poem of the plumes through the vale of memory use it

Survival of the exterminators

Alan Milward

ROBERT WISTRICH
Hitler's Apocalypse: Jews and the Nazi legacy
309pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £18.95.
0297187195

This sad and confused volume is an explanation of "anti-Zionism" written from Jerusalem during the Israeli war in the Lebanon by a scholar who is well known for his work on the Nazi party and on antisemitism. The first half of the book recounts and seeks to reinterpret the history of the German massacre of the Jews, the second half purports to show the importance of the spiritual inheritance of Nazi antisemitism in the post-war world.

Throughout the first half there is an unresolved confusion, which vitiates much of the second half too, between what can be attributed to Hitler on the one hand and to the Nazi party on the other. Robert Wistrich's theme is that Hitler was an apocalyptic Messiah for whom the salvation of the world depended on the extermination of the Jews. He therefore has no doubts that Hitler always intended to massacre not only the European Jewish population but, to destroy the settlements in Palestine as well. Much of the work is an example of Hitler's speeches and writings to show that this was so. While I would entirely agree that this may be a correct interpretation of Hitler's personal intentions and that Hitler did indeed himself decree the Jewish massacres, it is unacceptable in such a discussion to relegate the detailed scholarly arguments to the contrary by people at least as expert as Dr Wistrich and myself to one footnote, while giving some textual prominence to the refutation of similar views badly expressed by writers of manifest bias. It is also unacceptable to relegate to a few footnotes the even lengthier and more detailed arguments of those who have demonstrated that Hitler was only one part of a complex, polycentric, governmental system which allowed policy impulses to start from many different origins and meant that Nazi policy and the Nazi government were far from being Hitler's personal creation.

Wistrich writes at times as though we had learned nothing since the immediate post-war period, when right and left argued that we should all have known what was going to happen because Hitler had told us so in *Mein Kampf*, whereas the centre, unable to contemplate a rational investigation of the Nazi system, decided either that Hitler was mad or that

all Germans were bad. Such simplifications omit the whole history of the transformation of the National Socialists into a party with real power. They omit also the enormous complexity of the international and the economic contexts to which real governments and real parties have to operate. They now have little or no value as history and to draw lessons from them is to invite errors and exaggerations on an even greater scale than the original simplifications. In short, to say that Hitler determined the massacre of the Jews, although it seems to me to be probably true, does very little to explain why they were massacred and explains even less about post-war "anti-Zionism".

To explain Hitler's hold over the Nazi party and his influence on the post-war world on the grounds of his radical, "messianic" transformation of historical antisemitism seems equally dubious. Hitler and many leading Nazis were actually seeking to replace the Christian ethic as a foundation for political action. To suppose that this type of antisemitism was so powerful a force because Christianity was antisemitic is to fall at once into equivocal double-talk, which is exactly what Wistrich does. Nazism, he tells us, turned against the Christian substance in an internecine divide that was already contained within Christianity. So it does not really count that Hitler and many Nazi leaders did not think of themselves as Christians; "it was from Christian theology that the Nazis had ultimately inherited their demonological view of Jews and Judaism as a satanic force and the embodiment of universal evil" and "without this background of centuries of Christian history, six million Jews would not have perished". Even the Nazi party, as opposed to Hitler, intended to massacre the Jews, these statements would probably be false. Because the Nazi party had a wide variety of answers to what it called the "Jewish problem" and because only a small minority of its members could accept such a solution of extermination, especially of German Jews, they are also useless to the argument.

From this analysis of the Jewish massacres, however, the author proceeds in great leaps to the present day. The basis of Hitler's foreign policy was the necessity to eradicate all Jews everywhere, he argues, otherwise Germany and the world would not be saved. "There would", he tells us, "have been no Second World War at all, had it not been for Hitler's radical antisemitism." The agreements with the Zionists were "a cat and mouse game", because Jews had no right to exist and being parasites could not form a state. "Ideological opposition to the principle of Jewish sovereign-

ty in Palestine was virtually common ground by the summer of 1937 to all policy-making bodies in the Third Reich" (except, it might be added, the Ministry of the Economy, and two organizations subsequently responsible for the massacre, the SS and the Ministry of the Interior). This ideological opposition passed through Arab youth leagues and radical Arab movements into the post-war world of Islam where Hitler has found many prominent admirers, one reason being that the *Führerprinzip* and other Nazi attitudes are "essentially Islamic virtues". In such Arab movements anti-Zionism is a mask for antisemitism, because Islam's hatred for the Jews (like that of Christians) is "age-old". National Socialism, however, made Islamic antisemitism more radical. In their war against the state of Israel in 1948 many Arabs were inspired by a "conscious sense of identification with Hitler and the German Reich".

Even Khomeini is not without a Nazi inheritance, in spite of the fact that his mortal enemy, Saddam Hussein, shares the same inheritance. What is more, because the forces in Germany which produced the Nazis produced similar movements in Eastern Europe, most Eastern European governments have also been radically antisemitic since that time, while disguising this as "anti-Zionism". You may have thought that the government of the USSR in the 1930s had little in common with that of Nazi Germany, but not so; Stalin's "historic role was to gradually blur the distinction". As for Brezhnev, Andropov and Chernenko, they are "the heirs of Hitler". Gomułka was a fascist. Even Africa has a Nazi inheritance, especially Idi Amin. It does not seem, however, to have spread as far as South Africa.

Opposition to antisemitism by the government of Israel is mostly therefore to be explained by Hitler's survival among us in thought, word and deed, particularly among the extreme left.

February Books

Fiction

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Hodder & Stoughton

The well of misery

John Osborne

ROSE AUSLANDER
Ich höre das Herz des Oleaners: Gedichte 1977-1979
334pp. Frankfurt: Fisher. DM36.
3 100015170

Forecasting a certain kind of modern critic, Rose Ausländer has herself reflected self-consciously on the curious appropriateness of her name to her own life and work.

Wir kamen herein ohne Rosen
Wir blieben im Ausland.

The homecoming of which she speaks is her decision to settle in West Germany, and her emergence as a German poet. It is far from self-evident that this should have happened, for Rose Ausländer is an American citizen and had never previously lived in Germany.

She was born in Czernowitz, Bukovina, the home of the great Yiddish writers, Eliezer Stilanberg and Itzig Manger and also of Paul Celan. For a long time the poetry of Rose Ausländer has been overshadowed by that of

of the Suhrkamp edition of Celan's works, follow the seven volumes of Rose Ausländer's *Gesammelte Werke* (edited by Helmut Braun), due for completion this year.

Alfred Margul-Sperber recognized the quality of her early work, as he was later to recognize Celan's, and it was he who helped secure the publication of her first book of poems, *Der Regenbogen* (1939). There followed the years of persecution and hiding, which have left their mark in the anxieties and the language of the poetry, but no more so than the nomadic post-war years in the United States. These are the years which Celan spent in Paris, writing increasingly hermetic, intellectual poetry in the tradition of the French Symbolists; Rose Ausländer tempers the German heritage she shares with Celan, Hölderlin, Trakl, Else Lasker-Scheller, with the lucidity and warmth of Marianne Moore.

Kühles Verblühen
Jenseits
Jede Figur durchdringt
von Blut ihrer Idee

(A cool image nevertheless warms every figure with the blood of its idea). A second book of poems, *Blinder Sommer*, only appeared in

Background to the fore

John Turner

MICHAEL BALFOUR
Britain and Joseph Chamberlain
31 pp. George Allen and Unwin. £25.
004942193

This is a Times and Life rather than a Life and Times of Joseph Chamberlain. Michael Balfour explains in a preface that it is a parallel exercise to his *The Kaiser and His Times* (1964): Chamberlain is a figure around whom to write a study of Britain in the late nineteenth century. Though conceived in the 1960s, the book has been written entirely in the 1980s and reflects the concerns of this decade. Britain's economic decline, which now seems inexorable, dominates discussion. The vigour and confidence of mid-Victorian prosperity – the world we have lost – is the background to Balfour's account of the Chamberlain years.

Chamberlain symbolizes this vigour. Rising from a prosperous business background to become Mayor of Birmingham in 1873, he entered parliament in 1876. Turning the Birmingham Caucus into the National Liberal Federation, he made himself a force in the Liberal Party and joined Gladstone's Cabinet in 1880. Breaking with Gladstone in 1886 over Home Rule, he took his supporters briskly over to the Tories and entered Salisbury's Cabinet in 1896. After a short delay in which he started the war

which had been waiting to happen in South Africa, he invented Tariff Reform, which was well on its way to ruining the Tory Party when in 1906 he suffered the stroke which ended his career. Though not easy to like, he was and is impossible to ignore.

Balfour's book suffers unduly from its blurb-writer. We are told that it is an exercise in "counter-history", a study of what might have happened if Ireland had been set on the road to self-government in 1886, if the reforms of the 1906-14 Liberal government had been enacted before 1890, and so on. Pigs, one can only observe, might have flown. Fortunately, though, very little of the book is in fact taken up with random speculations. Nor is it a book to be dismissed as the "harmless occupation of an old gentleman", as Balfour impishly suggests in his own preface. Although one might quarrel with its conclusions and some of its methods, it is neither hare-brained nor dotty.

In another respect, it delivers less than the blurb suggests. We are promised a biography from "a radical standpoint", and we do not get it, unless the term is meant to be in upper-case. Balfour is perhaps a Radical historian in the manner of R. C. K. Ensor, but radical he is not. His criticism of late-Victorian Britain is that of the New Liberals who "wanted to retain individual initiative as the mainspring of the economic system but make it socially responsible". This is the political standpoint of Butler or Macmillan. From this perspective the attrac-

tion of Chamberlain as a biographical subject is that he had enough energy and imagination to intrude himself on the problems which most concerned New Liberals and also concern the author.

As a result, the life and doings of Chamberlain are subordinated to general comment, especially in the early part of the book. Two very broad chapters on "The Economic Background" and "The Radical Background" take up fifty pages before any Chamberlains are mentioned, and the first ostensibly biographical chapter, on "Young Joe", is largely devoted to discussions of the Second Reform Act, the state of the economy, and doubts about individualism. No unpublished sources are used, even from the Chamberlain papers, and most of the biographical material is taken from J. L. Garvin's *Life* (1932-4), with occasional support from Peter Fraser's *Joseph Chamberlain* (1966).

With the subject not so much set in a background as hidden in it, the reader's attention is drawn instead to the general thesis. Balfour's account of Britain's economic predicament and the paradox of the inevitable decline of the first industrial nation will cause few surprises among economic historians, but it is a worthwhile distillation of established scholarship. Its clearest message is that there are no easy answers to the problem of economic decline. On Radicalism he is less convincing: there is an inverted Whiggery in his journey from the Levellers to Chamberlain by way of Locke, Paine and the Utilitarians. Placing Birmingham in this eclectic tradition, he overlooks some recent work by David Cannadine and others on Birmingham politics.

Pre-war practice

K. G. Robbins

DOUGLAS J. NEWTON
British Labour, European Socialism and the Struggle for Peace 1889-1914
378 pp. Oxford University Press. £27.50.
019 8227663

"The trouble is", replied Keir Hardie to a suffragette at a meeting in Manchester in 1913, "that you are up against the same thing as we are. You have not the women of the nation behind you any more than we have the workmen behind us." Douglas J. Newton's careful study of the policies and activities of the British labour movement in relation to war and peace during the lifetime of the Second International is, in a sense, an extended commentary on this remark. He has noted the existence of a gap in the literature and filled it intelligently. Historians of the Second International, understandably enough, have focused on the German and French Socialists, while historians of the British labour movement have in general been concerned with its domestic attitudes and activities.

The tension between "British labour" and "European socialism", implicit in the title, is deliberate. The book gathers momentum as it describes the awkward problems, both personal and political, posed for the predominantly "reformist" British by collaboration with their "continental comrades". The author has faithfully examined the journals and archives of many trade unions and generally finds an indifference, during this period, to international issues. A teacher himself (in Australia), he notes with regret that not until 1911 did the National Union of Teachers declare that its members should inculcate in the schoolchildren of the nation a concern for international peace and goodwill. Of course, the South African war had seen the emergence of a significant "anti-war" campaign, but Newton notes the paradox that although the Labour Party was born in the midst of an imperialist war, its instinctive hatred of war was fixed in its heart "on that account".

His treatment of what turned out to be the "pre-war" decade is sound and informative. He adds interesting detail to our knowledge of the campaigns mounted by the labour movement after 1902. Hostility to Russia looms large here. Robb's anxiety notwithstanding, there is a broad tendency to look benevolently

When "Brummegem Joe" is finally reached the background is still in the foreground. Chamberlain's local political career is briefly described, but most of the author's effort goes to summaries of the Irish problem, the Education debate, and the history of the Census. From then on the book settles down into a pattern in which Chamberlain's activities are expounded and judged against a compressed summary of the main issues. Although it is a textbook, it has much of the authoritative petrician style affected by textbook writers in the great days of G. M. Young. Only when Chamberlain's personal involvement in events becomes too intense to be contained does the pace warm up. These episodes are the most satisfying in the book and it is sad that they are Ireland in the 1880s and the Anglo-German rapprochement in 1899-1901 seem to lead Balfour into a blow-by-blow narrative which brings his (biographical) subject alive. The absence of appetizing unpublished titles is more noticeable here than in the summary histories, and only the discussion of Anglo-German negotiations, drawing on Balfour's vast knowledge of published German sources, offers real novelty in insight.

This book does what its author has set out to do. Readers who like to take their history in the thick coating on a biographical pill will welcome it. But Radical Joe is not so happy a choice for the purpose as Kaiser Bill. The Kaiser was a lesser man than the circumstances which surrounded him, but he could not be left out of history. Chamberlain was constantly at risk of overplaying his hand and losing everything. To make him the centre of events is ultimately unconvincing.

lishing, but Newton draws rather ponderous conclusions from it. We learn, for example, that there was by 1909 "an increasing awareness of the problems of diplomacy and foreignness of the problems of diplomacy and foreignness". In trade union circles, "Translated, this probably means that there were more people passing against 'secret diplomacy' and 'tangling alliances', but there is little sign of the real problems of contemporary diplomacy being grasped, not even by Ramsay MacDonald. Yet, even within the labour movement, hostility to the grotesque overstatements of the "German menace" then current could not altogether disguise the fact that the "German problem" might at least be a "German problem". The last word on the country, even if it is not the best. It is a rambling and disorganized part collection of anecdotes, but warm, humorous, wise and packed with life. The pivot is early 1933, when Huxley returned to Kenya, where she had been up to prepare a biography of the great explorer, Lord Delamare; published in 1934 as *White Man's Country*. The research for her all over the colony, and provided an insight into many of its most eccentric personalities. The new book amounts to a "personal history of Kenya between the wars, with an emphasis squarely on the punkiest individuals. Many happened also to be English bureaucrats who, as a disaffected colonial official observed, "with every luxury at home seem to enjoy the greatest discomforts out here". They all got divorced and marry each other several times, and everyone drops "stone dead" after a life of rugged exertion and remarkable selfishness.

A looming presence in this, as in all her other books, is Huxley's redoubtable mother, Nellie Grant, one of the breed of gritty Victorian men and even grittier women who stamped round Africa in sensible shoes undisturbed by alien climate and resistant terrain, finding on daily life the relentless common sense of the English country. But common sense, which rarely travels well, was only one of the appearances of Englishness that the settlers sought to graft onto the tropics. Both these books document the contradictory and ultimately hopeless lengths to which white people went to import the trap of European existence.

Trzebinski is an Englishwoman, married to a Pole, and living in Kenya. Her first book was a widely acclaimed biography of Robert Hutton, the ill-fated hero of the

A cub comes of age

William Tindall

THOMAS PINNEY (Editor)
Kipling's India: Uncollected sketches 1884-88
2 pp. Macmillan. £25.
033 584679

We still view Kipling down the wrong end of the telescope of time. In the last fifteen years some degree of historical focus has entered in his literary stock has in consequence risen but he lived too long. If the young man who wrote *Plain Tales from the Hills* and was sub-editor of the *Lahore Civil and Military Gazette* the Kipling commemorated in this volume of *Uncollected Sketches* had died in his forties before the First World War, he would by now be enshrined to his proper period context and safe from our irrelevant moral assessments. But he lived on into times whose most important events he did not grasp, dying only in 1936, two years before George V ("The King has sent his sympathy ahead of him"). The distinguished

old persons who attended his Abbey funeral came from the services or from the world of Conservative politicians: they were not the intellectual and creative writers who, judging from the brilliance of his youth, should have been his natural companions.

In recent years, however, the overdue academic reassessment of his reputation has been gradually taking place, and this present book is part of the new, if low-key, Kipling industry. It consists of a collection of hitherto unknown and unprinted newspaper articles Kipling wrote in India between 1884 and 1888, the same period that saw the publication of the earliest of the stories which were later to be gathered together as *Plain Tales*. Later in life Kipling himself identified certain pieces of pseudonymous journalism from this time, and other items were known because he had sent cuttings to a friend in England. But once his fame was established he became wary both of his own juvenilia and of eager bibliophiles combing back-numbers of the *Lahore CMG* and the *Allahabad Pioneer* (where he subsequently went) in search of spoils. "Well, a man

does not like his boyhood's play work (for that is what it comes to) being given to the public after nearly forty years", he wrote in a letter in 1924.

The body of material from the early days that could reliably be attributed to him was therefore unrealistically small, for one of his extraordinary productivity. However, when his surviving daughter died in 1976, and his papers passed to the University of Sussex, there at last came to light extensive cuttings-books kept by the young Kipling himself, and it is by comparing these with the files of the *CMG* that Thomas Pinney made the present carefully edited and annotated selection.

Apart from the intrinsic interest of, say, a description of a Mohurram festival in nineteenth-century Lahore, or the original news story that was to transmogrify itself into well-known fiction ("The Story of Muhammad Din"), two strong impressions come from these pages. One is of Kipling's exceptionally lively intelligence and his catholic interest in everything his eye fell upon. How many cub-reporters, fresh back in India from aching years of British exile, would have been capable within a few months of describing both Indian and Anglo-Indian society like a resident of many years' standing, and going in for investigative reporting and still finding the resources within himself to write an imaginative description of a night of fever and a short story whose chief character is Asmodeus, "Le Diable Boiteux", from Alain René Lesage's eighteenth century romance? Add the fact that Kipling was only seventeen when he first took his seat at the *CMG*, with many editorial and doggy duties beyond that of writing, and only twenty-one when the latest of the pieces here reprinted was written, and you get some impression of the extraordinary vigour and ambition that drove this boy on. Not that he considered himself a boy. Being "a man" was important to Kipling all his life (see "If") and it is one of those ironies of fate that, just as his father John Lockwood Kipling encouraged

him into a man's occupation at a premature age, so Rudyard too, thirty years later, encouraged his own son to enlist under-age in the First World War. After the boy was killed, the grieving father wrote, in the best traditions of British verbal restraint that he himself had long ago noted among the British in India, "I'm sorry that all the years' work ended in that one afternoon but – lots of people are in our position – and it's something to have bred a man."

But to be bustled prematurely – however eagerly – into man's estate, particularly after Kipling's acrobatic upbringing, takes its toll, and the second thing one notices in this collection of pieces is the way the young Kipling's intellect and imagination seem to be in permanent suppressed conflict with certain other of his perceptions and beliefs. An idyllic early childhood speaking Hindi before English, followed by years of coarse lower-middle-class British company and a school of jingoistic bullies (but where the head gave him the run of his own library) – these are hardly the ingredients to form a well-integrated personality. The puzzle is not that Kipling sometimes sounds like Colonel Blimp and sometimes like E. M. Forster in the same piece, but that he managed to fashion a coherent personality for himself at all. No wonder it proved, as the years went by, to be rather an unyielding one.

There are many minor delights in this volume. I would recommend to anyone the nerve-racking description of the Lahore milk-sheds – "the refuse was blue and rotten below the surface and smelt beyond all description" – his article on travel by *gharri* in the wet season, another on the old graveyard in Simla, his pungent (and true) remarks on the infantilism of much Indian "sacred" literature, and his equally pungent remarks on his own race – "There is no society in India as we understand the word. There are no books, no pictures, no conversations worth listening to. Every man is in some service or other . . .". The *CMG* was Kipling's own first service. They were amazingly fortunate to have him.

ALL AMERICAN.

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Figures of fear and fun

David Fitzpatrick

R. V. COMERFORD
The Fenians to Context: Irish politics and society 1848-82
272pp. Dublin: Wolfhound Press, £17.50.
0863270611

Did Fenianism matter? As with so many Irish political eruptions, its significance has been greater as a source of inspiration and self-delusion for later "freedom-fighters" than as a force in its own time. In Ulster Protestant rhetoric, Catholic nationalists are still termed "Fenians". Yet the eponymous movement of the 1840s was, even by Irish standards, chaotic in organization, confused in objective, grotesque in its futile furtiveness, laughable in its military forays. Unlike the Dublin Rising half a century later, the snow-suffred Fenian manifestation of March 1867 failed to provoke crass coercion followed by popular conversion to revolutionary nationalism. Such was the subsequent shortage of martyrs that three assailants of a prison van (reputedly of the "rag, tag and bobtail" of Manchester society) had to stand in as heroes for the edification of posterity. Sympathetic military operations in North America were if anything more risible than those in the British Isles.

Remarkably little is known about the extent of organized support for the little bands of "physical force men" that clustered about James Stephens and his rivals. Even in 1866 the police knew virtually nothing about the rank and file, though when called upon for his "opinion as to the existence of an organization amongst the Fenian conspirators", the inspector general of the Irish Constabulary haggardly stated that "... I can with confidence say, that I am satisfied that such an organization does exist". Detailed information was forthcoming only when it ceased to be necessary. Long after 1873, when the Irish Republican Brotherhood postponed its revolutionary strategy *sine die*, the police compiled a numbered register identifying all Fenian suspects in Ireland and dogged their footsteps for a quarter of a century. Even the police had almost lost interest in the doddering shopkeepers and shoe-makers who acted as local "centres", when in 1916 a tiny group of plotters acting without reference to their supreme council staged another rising. This was to make the Fenian a figure of fear rather than fun, and for others a symbol of authority rather than sentimental attachment.

R. V. Comerford, by setting the Fenians in the "context" of broader political alliances and realignments between 1848 and 1882, has further refined our sense of the contemporary insignificance of Fenianism. He suggests that the commitment to physical force was largely formal: "one of the least interesting or illuminating things about most political movements is the ostensible object for which they are conscious of being banded together". Despite the major Fenian contribution to the personnel and idiom of the Land League and Parnell's party, Comerford maintains that "continuity of names and forms means little and these things were not of the essence". Through the agency of the numerous "new departures" of the 1870s, ex-Fenians who had been "outsiders" alienated from the Catholic bourgeoisie as well as the Irish state establishment were enabled to "come in from the cold". Thus frustrated labourers and artisans, by transferring from conspiratorial cells to populist organizations, achieved upward political mobility, and even "formed the backbone of the new catholic political establishment". The ex-Fenian was as effective as the Fenian was ineffectual, the revolutionary affiliation becoming significant even as it was discarded. Temporary association with a seemingly hopeless cause might permit oddballs to jump social barriers and acquire political influence, as was to occur again in Ireland after 1916 and in Northern Ireland after 1969.

Comerford is already well known for an important article on Fenian "patriotism as pastime" (1981), and for his biography published two years earlier of Charles Kickham, the archetypal Fenian oddball ("being totally deaf and almost totally blind, he was physically disposed to intransigence rather than action"). By

comparison, the work under review is a trifle disappointing. There is no sustained analysis of the movement's social composition (already briefly essayed by Theodore Hoppen and Samuel Clark as well as Comerford himself in 1981), even though the thesis outlined above cries out for confirmation by the accumulation of rank-and-file biographies. While rightly stressing the pre-eminence of American-based Fenians in funding the Brotherhood and directing its strategy, Comerford virtually ignores the social contexts of the movement outside Ireland. He adopts a straightforward narrative form without attempting to emulate Leon Ó Broin, who told the military story so colourfully and well in his *Fenian Fever* (1971). Comerford's narrative follows the tangled skein of political rather than military manoeuvring during that unfashionable period between famine and land war. It draws heavily upon secondary sources and newspaper reports, without revealing either the local detail

or the relentless analytic probing of Hoppen's brilliant study of similar title and time-span: *Elections, Politics, and Society in Ireland 1832-1885* (1984). My check of Comerford's citations to the first and fifth chapters records sixty-four references to secondary sources, fifty to contemporary accounts, nineteen to official publications and only eighteen to manuscript material. As a work of synthesis and reflection, it should prove particularly valuable to undergraduates. On occasion the analysis is rather primitive: "English opinion" being "outraged", "rural masses" being in "ferment", "catholic Ireland" joining in "the general political mobilisation of the United Kingdom". Yet there is enough intelligent synthesis, scholarly insight and revisionist spirit in this book to capture the attention of anybody concerned with Ireland, its theatrical rebels, and their curious habit of reappearing unabashed as staunch "constitutionalists" with scarcely a change of scene.



Step-dancing at the Castle, 1920, a Kodak print from Edith Somerville's family photograph collection, illustrating the Irish Ascendancy's interest in recording Irish scenes and practices they thought might be passing. The picture is reproduced in Gifford Lewis's *Somerville and Ross: The world of the Irish R.M.* (235pp. Viking, £12.95, 0 670 80700 5), which contains drawings and paintings by Edith Somerville and photographs from the family archives.

Telling types

Roy Foster

PETER SOMERVILLE-LARGE
Cappaghglass
354pp. Hamish Hamilton, £12.95.
0 241 11541 8

A book like *Cappaghglass* raises the perennial problems of processing oral testimony to create a sociological profile—unless one decides to abandon such criteria and treat it as something else. It is intended as a portrait of a community and a way of life (or several ways of life), told almost entirely in the words of "the people themselves". The place profiled is a pseudonymous fishing and market town on the west coast of Ireland. (If it is any specific location, one suspects Kerry from certain name-clues like Bannow and Mangerton; but it may well be a composite.) However, it is a more satisfying exercise if taken in the tradition of late nineteenth-century works with titles like *Ireland As It Is* or *Irishmen All*: a gallery of Irish types.

Here are the Priest, the Landowner, the Shopkeeper, the Republican (who rather oddly turns out to have been a Free Stater). Here

too are "blow-ins" like rich Germans and poor hippies; the old fisherman, the young schoolboy; the schoolmistress, the bone-setter. Their characters are skilfully indicated; what they actually tell us is perhaps less interesting, though usually convincing. The authentic incomprehension of (and perhaps distaste for) "The North" comes through. Sex hardly ever figures, and when it does it is generally called "blackguardism". Pops is important (there are interesting memories of goat as a staple meat) and, of course, drink. Emigration is a tragedy not yet past, statistics notwithstanding; sometimes there is a cold breath of rural crisis.

But even among the most vehement witnesses, a characteristic caution is apparent: "I happen to believe that by playing buryer you are demonstrating that you are Irish. I wouldn't say it in public." And significantly, the best story (about the spoils gleaned from a Latvian cargo ship wrecked off the coast in wartime) comes from a professional storyteller. Peter Somerville-Large must have listened to many such attractive performances, been much entertained, and come away wondering if they added up to very much. He is accurate and scrupulous enough as a recorder to have passed on much the same experience to his readers.

Protective colourings

Hubert Butler

LEON Ó BROIN
Protestant Nationalists in Revolutionary Ireland: The Stopford connection
234pp. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, £25.
0 7171 14139

Protestant Nationalists in Revolutionary Ireland: The Stopford connection is something of a patchwork made out of many different stories, with little link between their saving loyalty to the Reformation and the native land. Some, like Roger Casement, was hanged, and Countess Markievicz, who was sentenced to death, were in the tradition of Emmet and Smith O'Brien. Others, like Las Hyde and most of his Protestant colleagues in the Gaelic League, were strongly sympathetic and hoped to modify the status quo gaelicize it rather than shatter it by violence.

Alice Stopford Green surely belonged to the second group. It is true that she advanced money for the purchase of Maudslayi's Hamburg, but they were to be used to fund Asquith's Home Rule Bill against the Ulster Volunteers, not, like the fifth of the death of her husband, the historical Green, that her passion for her native land about which she knew nothing when she was there, developed. She was nearly shy of her famous book *The Making of Ireland* and *Undoing* was published. It was savagely attacked in the *Quarterly Review* for its inaccuracies and banned by the Royal Dublin Society. Tom Kettle, a leading Irish Parliamentarian, urged in the House of Commons that Alice Blirell, the Chief Secretary, should be the Charter of the Society so as to link activities to agriculture.

The third group of Protestant nationalists was a very large one, since it embraces all who adjusted themselves to a new post-Civil War status quo. Some had nationalistic after the Easter Week events some after the activities of the Black and Tans. Often they were closely associated with British establishment. For instance, Green's niece Dorothy was staying with Matthew Nathan, the British Under-Secretary at the time of the Rising, while her husband, William Price, was with the Army Pay Corps in Cork. As a Disraeli in the new Ireland, Price began, in Leon Ó Broin's words, "to absorb the atmosphere of the post-Rising Ireland" and changed his name to Linn. This sounds more like protection during than Gaelic or revolutionary activities but he loved Ireland and became an acknowledged expert on field archaeology. He remained a non-churchgoing Protestant like Dorothy but opined that "the Irish state Protestantism could be a hindrance to material progress".

Yeats was more of a realist. He changed his name from William to W.B. and protested against a proposal in the Senate to add a prayer to Irish to the official ceremony of going through a performance of something we do not know and do not learn will ultimately lead to a religious language. That is what it did.

As the Anglo-Irish Protestantism declined in numbers and in spirit it became obvious that nationalism no longer needed Protestant leaders. They needed rather to defend themselves. "Ireland is not more than a patch of earth," Yeats wrote in the *Irish Statesman*. "We are of it, it is of us, it is of us, it is of us." In speaking like this he was saying that he was defending the cause of a small Ireland.

There is much of great interest in this book but it would have been a better one had the author confined himself to his original theme, the Stopfords. How do such people, the Stopfords, and others like them, who were not members of the Gaelic League, pass from being a dominant authority to a powerless one? Leon Ó Broin has the irony and objectivity he could have wished this. As it is, his book is a splendid study of the Irish Protestantism of the late nineteenth century. Paul Veyne, a gospel that is not even marginal to the Stopford connection.

Between science and symbol

Hayden White

PAUL VEYNE
Writing History
Translated by Mina Moore-Rinovoluci
342pp. Wesleyan University Press;
distributed by Harper and Row, £30
(paperback, £12.95).
0 8195 5067 1

C. BEHAN MCCULLAGH
Justifying Historical Descriptions
252pp. Cambridge University Press, £25
(paperback, £7.95).
0 521 26722 6
JOSE ORTEGA Y GASSET
Historical Reason
Translated by Philip W. Silver
223pp. Norton, £18.50.
0 393 01831 8
DOMINICK LACAPRA
History and Criticism
145pp. Cornell University Press, \$17.50.
0 8014 1788 0

The great debate over the nature of historical knowledge has now gone on so long without significant issue that it threatens to become a matter more of ethnographic than of philosophical interest. No doubt some progress has been made since Kant, Hegel, Humboldt and Marx laid out the major positions on the matter. Historians have borrowed from the social sciences new methods of gathering, processing and representing their data, and philosophers have refined formulations of the epistemological issues involved in trying to conceptualize a "science" of the past or an "art" of facts: but we are no nearer to an agreement over the precise nature of historical knowledge than were thinkers of a century ago. This may be due to the value with which Western culture has endowed history as both a place where a distinctively human nature makes its appearance and the process by which the human species realizes its destiny. In this respect, the long debate over the question of historical knowledge seems to be inextricably bound up with modern Western culture's notions about its own identity, its status as a (or rather the) civilization, and the nature and value of that "modernity" to which, with varying degrees of pride, it lays claim. Perhaps it is the recognition of this fact that accounts in part for the most recent turn in historical theory, from an analysis of the epistemological status of historical knowledge to a consideration of the rhetoric of historical discourse.

This new turn in historical theory may reflect a decline of belief in a specifically historical consciousness. What an older tradition of thought, represented by Hegel, Croce, Oakshott, Collingwood and Cassirer, conceived to be historical consciousness now appears to be more a culturally specific mode of discourse, a manner of writing about one's self, nation, society, or culture, rather than a universally human mode of apprehending and relating to the world, as both myth and science can be said to be. One does not need the kind of historical knowledge cultivated in the West in order to survive, in the same way that one needs natural knowledge. The dictum of Santayana, to the effect that those who neglect the study of the past are condemned to repeat it, holds only for those cultures which, like our own, regard a failure to "develop" as a fate worse than death. We can take account of our past in a number of ways, of which what we call a historical accounting may be only the one favoured by our Western culture. Indeed, the current debate among Western intellectuals over "modernity" seems to suggest that history is simply the discursive ground on which the contest between tradition and innovation is fought out in our society. As thus conceived, the long discussion of the cognitive status of historical knowledge may be little more than a manifestation of the return of what had to be repressed in Western culture's attempt to identify itself as the very type of both civilization and modernity.

The four books under review attest to the relevance of this way of viewing the debate over historical knowledge that has agitated and engaged both philosophers and historians since the late eighteenth century. Paul Veyne, a gospel that is not even marginal to the Stopford connection.

"historical consciousness". There is only, he says, a "historical genre" of discourse, which was invented at a particular time in Western culture and developed alongside and in opposition to a scientific genre. Nor are there anything like specifically historical events, different in kind from natural events and for which a special method of explaining them might be required. It is simply that we in the West have, since the time of the Greeks, found it profitable to distinguish between those events which occur in the "sublunary world" and those which occur both here and everywhere in the cosmos. It is convenient and useful to speak about the former in historical and the latter in scientific terms. The distinction proposed is rather like that between an Aristotelian and a Newtonian or Einsteinian science. And in fact Veyne argues that historical knowledge, because it is knowledge about the sublunary world, has always been and should remain Aristotelian in the questions it asks about the past and the kinds of answers it gives to those questions.

He does not, of course, huy into Aristotle's notion of essences. What he values in Aristotle's philosophy is its ethics and aesthetics and the subtlety with which it permits us to approach the fascinating "complexity" of things human. Historians properly dwell upon the attributes of things. They characterize and classify these attributes by means of the kinds of *topoi* or commonplaces that Aristotle identified in his *Topics*, *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*; and the explanations they offer of historical subjects are the kind of commonsensical explanations for which Aristotle provided a philosophical analysis and justification. In so far, then, as historiography can be said to have a "method", this consists of a combination of erudition, techniques for handling and assessing documents, and the kind of maturity that Aristotle presupposed as a basis for his discussion of ethics, politics and art. And in so far as historians provide understanding of the worlds about which they speak, they do so by telling interesting, complex and intelligible stories about them. This means fitting the "facts" they have made out of the events they have studied to the forms of plots met with in imaginative literature or fiction. Historical events, it appears, can be plotted in a number of ways with equal plausibility and without in any way doing violence to the factual truths derived from study of the documentary record. This is why, Veyne concludes, it is never a matter of providing the best explanation of a given set of historical events, in the manner of scientists, but always of inventing a plot that will endow events with a certain "intelligibility" for the ordinary, educated readers of historical discourses.

It is unfortunate that Veyne's American publisher did not see fit to include the essay he appended to the second (condensed) French version of his text, "Foucault révolutionnaire". In this essay, Veyne almost succeeds in convincing us that Foucault, far from being the radical innovator his American admirers conceive him to be, was really the most conventional of historians. According to Veyne, Foucault's work appears revolutionary only because he undertook to do more precisely and more carefully what traditional historians had always claimed to do, that is tell what *really* was happening behind or beneath what the documents *seemed* to be saying. Foucault was able to do this, Veyne maintains, because he brought to his study of history a sensitivity to the reading of discourses that historians had always aspired to but had seldom achieved. Foucault was a master, Veyne contends, of that method of thinking his way back into the past that has always been the proper procedure of the greatest historians, whether they were of the Herodotean, literary type or the Thucydidean, scientific cast of mind. It is a mistake, therefore, in his estimation, to concentrate on the alleged innovations in method or interest in discontinuities which are generally taken to be the basis for Foucault's claim to originality in historical studies.

The Foucault essay permits us to understand how Veyne can pretend to dismiss as inconsequential almost every attempt to turn historiography into a science and at the same time appear to have written his book from within the interior of contemporary French, structuralist and post-structuralist theories of discourse. The particular slant of his book is comprehensible, it seems to me, only if it is read within the context of a knowledge of these theories. Without it, Veyne's book will appear gratuitously retrograde, even reactionary, possibly absurd to all those historians who hope to dignify historical studies by making them more scientific. His argument could be taken as validating Lévi-Strauss's attack on history as little more than the "myth" of Western culture and historiography as nothing but a discipline without a method. So too, Veyne's point of view is directly opposed to the project of the *Annales* school of historians, who wished to transform history into a science by excising from it every vestige of its traditional narrativism and its humanistic orientation. Although Veyne appears to be *au courant* with modernist theory in his insistence that historiography be treated as a discourse rather than a science, his theory of discourse is so traditionalist, it has to be regarded as a defence of that very ideology of humanism that Barthes, Kristeva, Derrida and even Foucault wished to demolish in their reformulation of how discourse functioned to create a certain kind of self-repressing subjectivity.

And yet Veyne's position is consistent with that return to the so-called narrativist notion of historical explanation which philosophers of history (from Dray, Gallie and Von Wright to Mink and Ricoeur) had begun to defend and even certain members of the *Annales* persuasion (Le Roy Ladurie, Carlo Ginzburg, Natalie Zemon Davis and Jacques Le Goff) began practising at just about the time his polemical and entertaining book first appeared. It is within the context of this return to the narrativist notion of historical explanation that we can grasp the timeliness of C. Behan McCullagh's careful analysis of historiography as a mode of interpretation cum description and his interest in the question of the grounds we might have for "believing" in the truthfulness of historical descriptions even when they can be said to "explain" very little.

Professor McCullagh is more concerned with how we might characterize the truthfulness of historical representations than with accounting for their discursive effects, but even here he wishes to establish criteria for justifying belief in different kinds of description, rather than simply establish grounds for determining which of equally plausible accounts might provide the "best explanation" of the events which serve as their subject matter. For McCullagh, arguments intended to provide the "best explanation" of a historical phenomenon, after the manner of scientific demonstrations, are only one and by no means the most appropriate mode of inference available to historians. Given the nature of historical events, which are "past", "singular", and seldom provided with just the right evidence to reveal the whole truth about them, arguments to the best explanation appear to be warranted only with respect to the least controversial events reported in the historical record. Consequently, McCullagh argues, historians are on their solidest ground when they limit themselves to the composition of accurate descriptions of the events that interest them, rather than explanations of the scientific sort.

Using a wealth of examples taken from the writings of professional historians, McCullagh demonstrates that most of them favour more or less refined statistical inferences or inferences based on criteria (of a taxonomic kind) and arguments by analogy to provide an understanding of their evidence. The descriptions thus produced are the kinds of interpretations that historians properly deal in, and they are more or less general depending upon the scope of the matters dealt with in straight history, on the one side, and more or less abstract, depending upon the level of generality on which they are elaborated, in philosophy of history, on the other. This means that McCullagh can find a place within a proper historiography for such mavericks as Marx and Toynbee no less than for the most nit-picking micro-historian. On his view, history is a capacious discipline, simply by virtue of the fact that description itself can be cast at any number of levels of abstraction or concreteness.

McCullagh makes no sweeping claims for the epistemic status of historical descriptions. He accepts the Popper-Hempel argument

regarding the relatively low-level (partial, porous and sketchy) nature of historical explanations cast in a scientific ("covering law") mode. But he does not regard historical knowledge of the descriptive variety as being less valuable than its scientific counterparts in the natural disciplines. We are, on his account, still justified in seeking the kind of "empirical truths" that historians have traditionally sought to establish, on pragmatic grounds. Historical knowledge, he tells us, can help us to respect those institutions and practices that are useful to society and to criticize (and reform) those that are oppressive. And even if an empirical approach to knowledge has been subjected to a nearly killing criticism by modern philosophers of science, it has none the less been of such usefulness in helping us to gain control over physical nature, it would be foolish, McCullagh insists, to abandon it in our study of culture and society.

McCullagh holds, then, that historical interpretations cast in one or another of the kinds of descriptive strategies that he has identified are not properly assessed by the criteria of truth and falsity which are honoured in the physical sciences. They are to be assessed in terms of their adequacy or inadequacy, with respect to their concomitance with the scholarly practices and standards prevailing among the community of professional historians. Interpretations which satisfy these standards may for practical purposes be regarded as true in a correspondence sense. This links historical truth to the conventions, rules and beliefs prevailing in a given society at a given time and place and submits historical discourse to governance by Austinian conditions of felicitousness, rather than to some universal standard of veracity. This position appears consonant with Veyne's contention that historiography belongs to the discourse of common sense rather than to that of science and that it is rhetoric rather than logic that presides over its production and authentication as a kind of knowledge. McCullagh does not himself draw this conclusion, but his analysis of the descriptive aspect of historical discourses points attention to the topical nature of historical knowledge quite as directly as Veyne wishes to do. Taken together, the works by Veyne and McCullagh permit us to understand how it is that a historical account can be both logically inconsistent in the arguments it adduces to explain a given phenomenon and even inaccurate in its facts and still appear to be plausible and persuasive to a given audience of readers. This is because discourse, and especially narrative discourse, is much more than an assemblage of facts and arguments about the facts. It is also a performance in which meanings are produced by a writer's mastery of such trans-propositional syntactical strategies as those displayed in story-telling and legal disputation. If we are reluctant to call such performances "oratorical", it is because both modern science and modern literature have condemned all oratory as mere eloquence — and obscured to themselves the rhetorical dimensions of their own discursive practices in the process.

The modern prejudice against rhetoric was shared even by such an existentialist philosopher as José Ortega y Gasset, whose own discourse is often characterized by philosophers of a scientific cast of mind as more eloquent than logically rigorous. Ortega was an unrelenting critic of modern science and the kind of "reason" on which it was based, no less than of technology, mass society and totalitarian political systems. But the so-called "historical reason", which he proposed as an antidote to the levelling effects of modern scientific and mass culture, was advanced in the interest of promoting a "creativity", "spontaneity" and "authenticity" that could have nothing of the merely rhetorical about them.

Historical Reason, a pastiche of notes and stenographic transcriptions of two lectures delivered by Ortega in the early 1940s, offers a last, existentialist twist on that tradition of thought deriving from Dilthey, which aimed to discriminate between the natural sciences, on the one side, and the "spiritual" (*Geistes*) disciplines (*wissenschaften*), on the other. The book is fragmentary, repetitious and inconclusive. The enemy is "pure" or "Cartesian" reason, which is supposed to preside over the physical sciences, and Ortega's purpose is to oppose to it a "historical reason", founded on

the recognition that man, unlike the rest of nature, has no changeless "essence", but only a "history", a capacity to change and to produce an endless variety of cultural embodiments of his creative impulses. Historical reason, on Ortega's account, is more of an attitude than a method of reasoning, an attitude of openness to the fact of human variation and adaptation to circumstances and of resistance to the leveling tendencies of modern mass society. In so far as Ortega deigns to dilate on the question of historical explanation and the kind of knowledge that historical inquiry can be said to provide, what he has to say in this book appears naive and inconsequential. At one point, he identifies historical reason with "narrative reason", but the identification is based on such infirm ground as to be more irritating than enlightening. "Today", Ortega tells us,

man is as he is because yesterday he was something else. Therefore, to understand what he is today we have only to relate what he was yesterday. That is enough, and here we have, come to light, just what we are doing here. This narrative reason is "historical reason".

It is this sort of thing that has given both philosophy of history and narrative a bad name, and Ortega's reputation as a philosopher will not be enhanced by the publication of this book. It can only be of interest to students of Ortega's thought (who are not likely to need an English translation, in any event), and little purpose is served by its presentation in an English version at this time. About the only thing positive to be said about it is that in his efforts to identify historical reason with narrative reason, Ortega anticipated the reconceptualization of historiography as a kind of discourse rather than as a kind of science that has begun to engage theorists of history just lately.

Dominick LaCapra's *History and Criticism* can be taken as representative of historians' interest in this project as well as the concerns which attend its execution. He openly defines his purpose as an attempt to "revive a Renaissance ideal of historiography" in which "scholarly research is linked to 'rhetorical' and 'ethicopolitical' discourse". This purpose, which involves regarding historical studies as "a vocation as well as a profession", leads him to a consideration of the historian's "transferrential relation to the past whereby the processes at work in the object of study acquire their displaced analogue in the historian's account".

LaCapra specializes in intellectual history, what used to be called "history of ideas" or "cultural history", but is nowadays often referred to as "cultural criticism". This last characterization derives from the project of the anthropologist Clifford Geertz to import the (largely New Critical) techniques of textual exegesis into the analysis of ethnographic phenomena, to treat cultures as texts, and to conceive their interpretation as a kind of reading of a "book of culture". This is an enterprise fraught with ambiguities and misunderstandings due to the plethora of theories of reading which litter the current literary-critical landscape. As a consequence, if one is going to investigate historiography, either as a kind of writing about culture or as a kind of discourse to be read, then one has to choose among the host of theories about both writing and reading, of which a "rhetorical" approach to these activities is only one.

LaCapra is aware of all this, but he insists that a recognition that "rhetoric is a dimension of all language use", rather than a characteristic of only "eloquent" speech, will give historians new insights into both the "documents" they study and the "literary" aspects of their own (and others') discourse. It is this conviction about the ubiquity of a rhetorical element in all discourse that allows LaCapra to dismiss the "objectivist-relativist" dispute as offering "false options" for historians in the conceptualization of their enterprise. An awareness of the rhetorical dimensions of culture in general and of discourse in particular would permit historians to apprehend the "dialogical understanding" that informs both "discourse" and "truth", the "performative" nature of any representation of "reality" in language and the ludic or "carnavalesque" dimensions of cultural and social formations.

Ultimately, however, a rhetorical sensibility will, in LaCapra's view, guard the historian against the dangers in what he calls "the transferrential relation between practices in the past

and historical accounts of them". It is transference, he argues, which causes "fear of possession by the past and loss of control over both it and oneself". In his discussion of this phenomenon, as it manifests itself in historical discourse, LaCapra comes close to outlining a psychology, not of history, but of the type of scholar who is drawn to historical studies. A specifically historical approach to reality presupposes an apprehension of the past as both radically different from and organically continuous with whatever is conceived to be "the present". This creates the basis for a distinction between two kinds of historical objects, those that are felt to be so radically different from ourselves that no continuities between them and us appear discernible and those that will interest us precisely because we wish to view them as related to our own cultural dispositions in some genealogical, even genetic, manner. The first kind of object exposes historical studies to a kind of xenophobic impulse, which may manifest itself in a fascination for the exotic *per se*, while the second kind exposes historical inquiry to the dangers of a narcissistic appropriation of the past which sees the same thing everywhere and everywhere things just like ourselves. It is against these twin dangers that LaCapra's notion of a "dialogical" conception of historical inquiry is intended to guard.

Dialogue – with the past, with other cultures, with practitioners of other disciplines, and so forth – depends upon our capacity to resist the temptations of authoritarian "monologism" and to cultivate our sensitivity to the more democratic "plurivocality" of discourses. The formulation is Bakhtinian, from whom LaCapra borrows the concept, and Bakhtin used the notion to criticize what he regarded as the myth of literalness which, in his view, was always the mark of authoritarian and purely self-regarding speech. Culture, for him, was a plenum of different voices and dialogical discourse was its most humane instrument of communication. For LaCapra, when historians speak about the past (without having first sought to listen to the many messages it emits by way of the historical record) or who they subject its "objects" to the rigours of some monolithic explanatory method, so as to "reduce" its plurivocality to the dead hum of the machinery used to interpret it, they offend against the morality of their vocation even while remaining true to the ethics of their profession. It is in the interest of promoting a dialogical morality for the historical vocation that LaCapra seeks to redefine the relation between historiography and "literature".

It is in the great genres of prose discourse (especially the novel, but also in satire, the philosophical dialogue, the familiar letter and so on) that Bakhtin found the model for that dialogical mode of communication he set over against the monologism of authoritarian speech. LaCapra sees in the novel especially, not only a precious source of evidence for retrieving the many different voices in which the past spoke to and about itself, but also a model for the kind of historiography that cultural historians should try to write. This is a far cry from the ideal of the historian as a writer of "realistic" narrative prose whose sole concern is to tell the true story of what really happened in the past. It is much more consonant with current literary critics' notions of narrativity as having to do with many more things than "story-telling". LaCapra's argument implies that, if there is a literary dimension to historical discourse, it might well be expressed in the writing of historical narratives in the manner of modernist or even post-modernist novels, as well as in that of the nineteenth-century "realists".

A similarly Bakhtinian notion of the "carnavalesque" element in culture – and in our discourses both within and about it – is used to justify LaCapra's efforts to assimilate Derrida's ideas about writing, textuality and deconstructive criticism for the analysis of historical phenomena, on the one side, and for characterizing the relations between history and other kinds of discourses, on the other. "Derrida", LaCapra writes, "has not only rehabilitated limited or marginal phenomena in the forefront of history, but radically undermines the tendency to victimize or scapegoat them; he has also suggested ways in which the continually-discontinuity model of historical process might profitably be replaced by a model featur-

ing the (Heideggerian) notion of "repetition and change, iteration and alternation" as occurring "together over (or as) time". This model is attractive to LaCapra, because the notion of "Temporality as repetition with change . . . situates the critic in a transferrential relation to the 'object' of study; it denies the possibility of total mastery but it also opens that of a more informed and self-critical 'dialogue' with the past."

LaCapra does not mention Paul Ricoeur's recent *Temps et récit*, his two-volume study of the issues involved in those discussions of historical knowledge and discourse opened up by Aron, Collingwood, Popper, Mandelstam and Heidegger in the 1930s and 1940s. But Ricoeur provides ample justification for the consideration of historiography as a mode of discourse peculiar to Western civilization and of rhetoric as the organon of this discourse. Ricoeur's central point is that there are at least two ways of speaking about the world, one appropriate to a scientific and literalist discourse, the other to a symbolic discourse. The latter, he maintains, is both desirable and necessary when it is a matter of trying to represent those aspects of human experience which are intrinsically aporetic in nature though none the less real for being such. The experiences of temporality and of death, which ultimately reduce to the same thing for the human animal, would be cases in point. We cannot not speak about these experiences, give expression to or represent them in speech, or attempt to make sense of them, even though we may know that we can never do so adequately. Historical discourse, in Ricoeur's formulation, is one of the modes of speech in which our experiences of time and death are given symbolic expression, which is to say, are assimilated to the traditions of sense-making available to a given cultural tradition. And it is in narrative historiography especially that these experiences can be made sense of in a manner that is both "poetic" and "realistic" at one and the same time. This is what makes of historiography an interpretative rather than an explanatory enterprise.

Historians have not in general been willing

to acknowledge that their discourses are more symbolic or, more precisely, aporetic operations than simply informative or explanatory. But there have always been those willing to admit that theirs was ultimately an "interpretative" enterprise. For the most part, however, interpretation was understood as a model of that which informed the sacred texts, impelled by a desire to find a single, unambiguous meaning and to provide thereby the "best" interpretation. In the way that a scientist might aspire to provide a "best explanation" of a given body of phenomena, thus, when it came to a discourse of historical hermeneutics, historians often proceeded with the same kind of "best" interpretation of interpretations as more or less "true" "body of facts" that was supposed to be bedded within the documents they were awaiting only an excavation to permit their "objective" reality against the "subjective" interpretations of the past. This notion that historical facts were "found" in the documents blocked a proper appreciation of the extent to which "history" was constructed out of reflection on "events" beyond the considerable interest of her belonging to objective reality: facts are constructed but characterize its writer, if only because protocols of different discursive characteristics. This means that there can be no valid, adequate, or even "true" interpretation, as there are different discursive protocols in any given culture as paradigmatic of the world. In her essay on Anna Karenina, for example, she speaks of "facts" even when the "events" of the novel are openly admitted to be "imagined". Historians have always known that their enterprise requires as much "imagination" as "knowledge" or "erudition". With a new historians' attention to the discursive aspects of their enterprise, they are now put to the test of having to recognize that imagination has as much a role in the production of "knowledge" as it was formerly thought to have only in the production of the "writing" which distinguished "history" with "style" from their less "interesting" leagues.

Between ideas and events

Christopher Seton-Watson

BRUNELLO VIGEZZI (Editor)
Federico Chabod e la "nuova storiografia" italiana (1919-1980)
719pp. Milan: Jaca Book. L38,000.
88 165004 8

Federico Chabod e la "nuova storiografia" italiana is the product of a distinguished gathering of Italian historians which took place in Milan in 1983 to mark the twentieth anniversary of Federico Chabod's death. In thirteen substantial papers, and contributions of varying length from forty other participants, it surveys Italian historiography of the inter-war years. The titles of the papers give an indication of its range: the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, Regional History, and the Modern State, Religious History, History of Ideas, Historicism, Economic History, History of International Relations, the Organization of Historical Studies, International Congresses, Fascism and the Historians, and 1945-1950.

The book is concerned not with the years of Chabod's primacy after 1945, but with his formative years under Fascism. From the many personal tributes there emerges the picture of a historian of exceptional range and sensitivity, who could communicate to his pupils both a commitment to meticulous scholarship and an understanding of the complexity and "imponderability" (one of his own words) of history. His major published works range from Machiavelli to Italian foreign policy after 1870. One of his enduring interests was the relationship of political ideal to political events and structures, as revealed especially in his studies of the origins of the modern state and in his reflections on the historical links (the *filio univario*) between the Renaissance and the Risorgimento.

Although Chabod is its central figure, the book also examines the record of many of his

contemporaries, notably Delfino Della Porta, Walter Maturi and Carlo Morandini. Editor, Brunello Vigezzi, presents Chabod as the basing exponent of the "new historiography", which broke away from the traditional historiographical schools of Croce and Gentile. Its main feature, according to Vigezzi, was the recognition of the European dimension of the Risorgimento and of the centrality of international relations. In the 1930s the "new historiography" was centred on Volpe's *Storia Moderna* in Rome.

Several of the contributors to this volume advance the very existence of a "new historiography" and argue that the break with the past came only in 1945. There is also a wide view on the extent to which the new history was conditioned or restrained by the Fascist régime. What emerges clearly from the papers of Ernesto Galli della Loggia, Renzo De Felice, and that Volpe, though a convinced Fascist, allowed the membership of his school, who included Nello Roselli, a deal of latitude, and on many occasions up to Mussolini in defiance of the party's autonomy. Chabod himself, who kept active politics until the war, sympathized with some of Fascism's achievements, but after 1945 he was active in the Action Party in the Resistance and appointed the first governor of the region after its liberation in 1945.

Much stress is laid on the influence of Chabod of Melniko, under whom he worked in Berlin in 1925-6 and whose influence is said to have been decisive in his later work. Chabod's other non-Italian "masters" were the British historians, and to a lesser extent the French. Chabod's economic historians, there is no doubt, were of any influence of, or contact with, Italian historians before 1945. One of the main questions was whether this was due to mutual interest, indifference, or at least in the case of the British, to the barrier of Fascism.

American readings

Diane Johnson

MARY MCCARTHY
Occasional Prose
341pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £14.95.
0297787551

Mary McCarthy has been a visible and influential figure in American letters almost since her graduation from Vassar in 1933. A writer of a critic of both literature and culture (it is in American letters to take on both), she recently received the National Medal for Literature, America's most important literary honour, one which, in a country whose literature has been dominated by the romantic tradition, has not often gone to a writer in the comic or satirical tradition, or to an intellectual, or to a woman. (It happened twice before: Eudora Welty and Marianne Moore.) It is possible that she got it in spite of her wit and penetration, rather than for them.

At any rate, such a person is herself of interest beyond the considerable interest of her observations; and *Occasional Prose* cannot help but characterize its writer, if only because it is the writer who is the organizing principle. Someone who had among her friends F. W. Dupee and Philip Rahv, Nicola Chiaromonte, Hannah Arendt, or who happened to be lecturing in Scotland, Lawrence, Kansas, Montreal, or New York, *Anna Karenina* was for her, as for many of us, a favourite book, and we are struck by her observation, in her essay on *Anna* ("On Re-reading a Favourite Book"), that the return to a favourite novel is generally tied up with changes in oneself that must be counted as improvements but have the feel of losses.

This, and several other essays on fiction, advance her view that the novel is an essentially didactic form, at its greatest in the nineteenth century, before it was robbed of its connection to the moral intentions of the author by the interference of Henry James. Certainly, in her observations about the meaning of *Anna Karenina* one sees the operation of sceptical authorial intelligence, though it isn't absolutely clear whether this is McCarthy's or Tolstoy's. At the end of the novel, Levin has just the faint feeling of meaninglessness. Now every minute of his life has a "positive meaning of goodness which I have the power to invest it". But since, precisely, by Tolstoyan standards the proof should be visible and palpable, there is no reason to believe that this too is not an illusion, of a very common kind, created by need.

The idea of getting one's moral education through novels, an idea by no means universally accepted today, though it used to be the "function" to them, is discussed in "Politics and the Novel". Here she observes that, contrary to the received notion that the American novel is domestic, not concerned with public affairs, not political, "Americans, I think, tend to get their political education through fiction – occasionally through poetry, though this is becoming rarer." She feels the British novel to be less political, the Continental novel more so.

Part of the pleasure of this collection arises from Miss McCarthy's own pleasure in the disciplines of definition and analysis, and her ability through them to prompt in the reader the impulse to respond and discuss, or merely to nod: many (American) readers will agree that they too were led to politics by John Dos Passos. McCarthy's is surely the most lucid recent attempt to defend the rights of readers to receive ideas, and of authors to put them in their works, and of the fundamental allegiance of the novel to common sense.

The relation of opera to common sense is delightfully examined in the very funny moral

though pragmatism is supposed to be our national faith."

One could wish for more of her observations on the subject of national character. She speaks of Chiaromonte's realism as an Italian characteristic, or of "the starchy preconceptions of the Frenchman". She is writing of Jean-François Revel's *Ni Marx Ni Jesus*:

Ever since you could count to ten or spell o-h-a-t, you have been secure in the thought that the United States is the citadel of imperialism, racism, vulgarity and conformism. And now a Frenchman returns from a voyage of discovery to say it is a hothed of revolution.

She is perspicacious on the subject of both the French and American national political character, and correctly predicts here (1971) that the "diverse effervescence" of the seemingly blossoming American counter-culture at that period would not submerge the ruling American values.

A semi-expatriated observant American, as literary history has shown, but not often, is peculiarly fitted to observe the qualities of Europeans, the "other strains" of our culture freeing her of the reflex attitudes with which Europeans stigmatize each other. (It's interesting, though, that McCarthy seems to agree both with the English attitude to the French, and vice versa.) Americans rarely comment on European character, perhaps from diffidence, (which includes assuming that they must, however, accept European descriptions of them) or from preoccupation, for they are usually more interested in defining, or inventing, themselves.

Opinion in America, unlike in England, is a strange commodity not always encouraged or approved of. Mary McCarthy, though opinionated, has the tact to present her opinions wittily and the learning to persuade the reader to bar views. Perhaps you did not know that "the Cistercians thought that the rounded apse was sinful. Curves were more wicked than right angles." One is struck, reading these occasional pieces, by how American they are, or rather, how they are probably more real and amusing

for an American reader. There is a gap between English and American letters, testified to by the fact that few in the United States have read Anita Brookner or Salman Rushdie, while a recent British list of the twenty best American novels since the war contains works by writers no one in America has ever heard of, and, where the writers are favourites, their weaker books. (There are, too, some strange omissions – for example, Mary McCarthy.) McCarthy's remark, of Chiaromonte's prose, that it "hits the reader with the double force of surprise and recognition" certainly describes the effect of her own prose on an American, though the English reader may not perhaps remember the mood before the Presidential election of 1972, or what the *Parisian Review* was. But everyone will feel the double force of her views on the plot of *La Traviata*, for instance how odd it is that "It has entered nobody's mind that the fiancé of that pure and spotless sister might marry the girl anyway, whatever her brother's truancy, if only he loved her as devotedly as the father claimed".

One is everywhere persuaded by her confidence that the most elusive matters can, by thinking about them, be made to yield up something – in her essay on "Politics and the Novel", or her lectures on "Language and Politics", or in the lecture "On Living With Beautiful Things" where the subject is that mysterious property, beauty of whom ("if beauty is a god, and I still think he is") she asks some simple-stunning, very hard questions: what good does it do us to live with or own beauty? "Is the owner of choice furniture and superb paintings better or worse than the ordinary rich philistine?" Her answer to this is somehow very characteristic: "My guess would be worse, though he may be a little easier to talk to, at least at the start. It comes down to this: the taste one develops from association with beautiful things equips one to select more of them. That is all: a rather vicious circle."

There is a logic to friendships, the attraction of likes. In her memorials of Dupee, Rahv, Chiaromonte and Arendt, the reader finds



Mary McCarthy

countless things that seem also to describe McCarthy's own writings: of Dupee's essays, "how brilliant they are in what appears to be an effortless way . . . effortless, amusing, observant, nonchalant. The tone is that of conversation. The continuing flashes of insight appear almost casually, like heat lightning." Of Chiaromonte, the "absolute realism and clear-sightedness", qualities "summed up like an ideogram in his very name: 'clear mountain', 'bright mountain', which reminds one of a passage elsewhere in her work (in *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood*), where she speaks of hoping, aged about twelve, that of the two possibilities, "star of the sea" and "bitter", her name would in her case turn out to mean the latter (hers was an early dedication to the life of the mind). But here she was plainly wrong (also, I think, about the origin of Apple Calotte): she is a star instead.

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Fecklessness and fiasco

Neville Shack

T. CORAGHESAN BOYLE
Greasy Lake and other stories
229pp. Viking. £8.95.
0670 805424

T. Coraghessan Boyle's new collection of stories displays an impressive craftsmanship. His method, seamless and well-turned, gives him great scope for working the right tone of flippancy into his burlesques, as well as paths into his personal diagnoses. There is never a hint of sentimentality about his depictions of losers in trouble. People are left alone with their own visions, sometimes ridiculous because of their stupidity; self-awareness being in shorter supply than luck. These are stories – mostly set in America – about fecklessness and fiasco, cushioned in the best sense by a prose style that is alternately staccato and verbose. So the satire is fine, even when some of the descriptive detail is glutinous.

"Like and Nina" posits a love affair between President Eisenhower and Mrs Khrushchev, hilariously proof against the seething enmity of the Cold War. The narrator, Paderowski, a minor functionary in the White House with special responsibility for discreet assignations, tries to tell the tale as dispassionately as possible. He marvels at the intense emotions felt by the two protagonists during the Khrushchevs' visit to America. Circumstances couldn't be

more bathetic, given the backdrop of a grand state occasion, particularly when Paderowski is charged with the task of secretly chauffeuring the couple around the streets of Washington. The whole notion of a private face behind glaringly public events is being sent up – "I alone knew by how tenuous a thread hung the balance of world peace". This solemn manner unfailingly produces comedy through deadpan documentation.

Boyle's skill at imaginative dramatization of a clichéd Western view of life in Moscow itself is demonstrated in "The Overcoat II". The small ambitions of a small conformist, Akaky, seem to be extended fantastically when he acquires a stylish coat. Every received tabloid opinion about the grinding tedium of Russian life finds its way in here, third-hand impressions turned into wicked fancies on the page. So there are lengthy food queues, shabby clothes and all the patient sufferings of an exemplary citizen of the Soviet Union who inhabits a room which is stated, quite factually, to be perhaps half a size larger than the one that drove Raskolnikov to murder. The satire in this piece does more than simply poke fun at bullying Russian officialdom and its hypocritical view of Western consumer culture. The irreverence is seasoned, the caricature absurd but not extravagantly so.

Boyle often dwells on images which are then etched on the sensibility and made vital. "Whales Weep" takes one man's very amateurish and short-lived interest in the giant

mammal of the deeps; his own tacky sentiments and the scale of his world-weariness are dwarfed, as you would expect, by contact with Leviathan itself. The nerve-ends of Boyle's prose sting at the encounter. "Stones in My Passway, Hellbound on My Trail" is a rendering of episodes in the doomed life of the legendary bluesman, Robert Johnson. Here the whole mood is built up out of a composite of powerful fragments, dream-like pictures and everyday ones in alternation. "Greasy Lake", the title story, centres on a fairly godforsaken place, fit for nothing more than a violent set-to and heaps of detritus. The correlatives in this diseased landscape are masterfully exploited, while the general grotesque effect is registered in the first-person narrative; all-too-immediate experience through the pores of the skin.

In "Rupert Beersley and the Beggar Master of Sivan-Hoots", Boyle sportively cracks the mould of a sub-genre of Anglo-Indian detective stories. The numerous children of an Indian ruler are disappearing one by one, and the bumbling Beersley is brought in to solve the mystery. Almost predictably, he loses himself down alleyways of self-indulgent speculation. The lampooning works so well – and this is true of the whole volume – because the foibles of an essentially asinine figure are exaggerated to just the right degree. Boyle can also find plenty of straightforward lively entertainment in playing about with trifles, making them graphic, but still managing to tune everything to the demands of a constructive riotousness.

Sadness in shabby rooms

Jim Crace

NANCY PHELAN
The Voice Beyond the Trees
164pp. Quartet. £8.95.
07043 25500

Both Nancy Phelan's new novel and Emma Hamilton, its doleful and anaemic heroine, are cursed with poor beginnings. The first chapter of *The Voice Beyond the Trees* and, particularly, the slovenly opening paragraph with its erratic commas and anky syntax, seem a prelude to a novel of exceptional clumsiness and pretension: "Stranger than the ousé's accusations, the doctor's, psychiatrist's, parson's and do-gooder's questions was the realization that one's own words, out of context, coloured by preliminary denunciations, could so betray their author", writes Phelan, and, in a second sentence, equally contorted and ambiguous, she adds: "To the ordinary decent reader these people proudly claimed I was self-condemned." Only the most determined unscrupulous of grammatical muddles will feel encouraged to read on. But there are pleasures ahead. Every subsequent chapter is an improvement on the first: the prose becomes less buckled and the narrative, though narrow and sermonizing in its ambitious and manner, is both perceptive and heart-felt.

Emma Hamilton's poor beginnings, her inheritance of "sadness, ugliness, loneliness... emptiness", place her to the sole charge of an elderly widowed mother enfeebled by grief and Australian brandy. In the Sydney bay-side suburb of Moxham. There "the prevailing mood's resolute ascent" as the jovial beer-swilling "speakables" and the colourless, hard-working "modest respectables" are edged out by Australian yuppies, the "good-at-golf husbands with brisk, well-groomed, uniform wives".

The Hamiltons, whose battered marriage with its woodworm and sea-views is the last evidence of their aristocratic origins, are little-generation Moxles, down-at-heel, odd, but "historical". Emma, condemned by a disfiguring birth-mark to a life of grouchy isolation and the "consolations" of music and literature, is the oddest of them all. She hears voices. She keeps a diary which reads in part like the slogans on a Woodstock tee-shirt or a mantra from one of Phelan's best-selling yoga books ("I'm not alone, I'm part of it all, part of trees, waves, clouds..."). She clambers on to the roof at night to commune with Mozart, with Debussy, the cat and the "scalloped" bay where the muted evenings porpoises came sliding and scalloping through the smooth grey sea. She has cut herself off from that "practical drudgery" everyday love to be used all the time in commonplace ways – cups of tea, friendly sniffs, gentle bands.

Only her mother's death, the birth of her nephew Charles and the kindness of her sister-in-law, Shirley ("I have no brains, I'm just a breeder") can restore her to the unworldly and submissive equilibrium enjoyed by those who count the Anvil Chorus from "The Trovatore" as high culture but who can both give and receive affection without cynicism.

In the hands of a tougher, more cynical writer, such as Caroline Blackwood in *Granny Webster*, or a more mordant and adventurous humorist such as Beryl Bainbridge, the Hamiltons of Moxham, their crippled sensibilities and shabby rooms, would have provided material for an unsettling exploration of ugliness, madness and self-esteem. But Nancy Phelan, for all her insight and sincerity, is not the writer to exploit such distressing themes. Her imagination – like her prose – is too charitable by far. And the novel, marred by basic errors of approach, Emma, for example, presents too direct an assault on the reader's sensibilities, and her self-analysis is too coherent for a character whose problems, like the monkey-vines of Moxham, are "looped like skipping ropes, knotted like varicose veins". *The Voice Beyond the Trees* is an appealing novel, its characters and their complicated suburban world are treated with unobscured generosity and a "purity of heart"

Dazzling in the dark

Philip Smelt

ROBERT SPROAT
Stunning the Punters
190pp. Faber. Paperback, £4.95.
0571 138233

It is unusual for a collection of short stories to cover as wide a field as Robert Sproat's *Stunning the Punters*, in which the various narrators include an Asian shopkeeper, a racist skinhead, an Irish labourer and a high-flying woman civil servant. What unifies the stories is that they are all set in London; and Sproat revels in the cosmopolitan diversity of the capital.

Sproat's characters speak many kinds of English, and the opening of the first story, *Black Madonna Two-Wheel Gypsy Queen*, sets the tone for all that follows: "Some things look right as rain, but when you think about them it don't stand up, right?" Sproat appears fascinated by the uses and abuses of language. Sometimes the idiom is merely quaint, as in "A Small Difference Only" where Mr Patel explains his relationship with his wife:

The good Mrs P is a jewel beyond price but she always has a mind of her own and I am a peaceful man. I am very quickly learning that the good Mrs P becomes most unhappy when crossed in matters domestic and is a true adept at sharing her unhappiness. I believe most sincerely that it is truly foolish to court unhappiness, my friend.

In the title, Sproat focuses on the abusive language of a group of brutal skinheads who decorate a wall beside a railway line with such crude and incoherent slogans as "ON FIRE SAMBO ABANDON WOGS SLUM TERRIBLE

TERRIBLE". Several months after this vandalism, the narrator is on a train that passes by the graffiti-sprayed wall and he observes two fellow passengers, pompous academics, who studiously ignore the outrageous and semiliterate slogans that scream racial hatred at the train "because it scared the shit out of them and they didn't want to see it. Them punters is well stunned...". The two men mask their embarrassment by engaging in a loud conversation which reveals their own linguistic weaknesses. One of them pretentiously classifies a school of literary criticism as "Tail-wagging-dog-ism".

As if to reinforce his fascination with language, many of Sproat's characters speak in malapropisms – the old drunk in "Mistaken Identity" is entirely restricted to this form of expression. In "Firework Night Isn't In It", the backward Vera concludes her story with some encouragement for her guardian uncle and aunt, whose business is threatened with "liquidization". She tells them that "Our ship has come home and Lloyds will ring the Libertine Bell"; but it seems as if Sproat has killed an already tired device. Although Vera works part-time in her uncle's Chemist shop, she is unable to "get her tongue around" medical terms or, indeed, understand for the most part what is being said to her. That she should have any notion of Lloyds or libertines is worse than improbable.

Underlying this problem is a deeper failing in the collection as a whole. The characters are accurately drawn, their accents are, as it were, impeccable and the locations of the stories are masterly; but there is a sense in which they lack weight, leaving the punter dazzled but none the wiser.

The magic touch

Carol Rumens

ZDENA TOMLIN
Stella's Shoe
157pp. Hutchinson. £8.95.
0091636302

To some extent, Zdena Tomlin's first novel is two novels, or at least two genres. In so far as it is the ship, honest, mutedly feminist report on the identity crisis of a working-class writer-heroine who has put down a root or two in vaguely middle-class surroundings (albeit NI rather than NW1), its territory is familiar, and English, enough. But there is much more to *Stella's Shoe* than that. Tomlin's heroine, Linda Stiflik, is a Czech emigrée with a long memory, and the narrative indulges at times in a magical and symbolic mischief-making, quintessentially Central European, reminiscent of Tomlin's compatriot Milna Kundera.

Unexpectedly, it is the anxious, rain-spattered, day-to-day existence of Linda Stiflik that unleashes the narrator's lumps and fireworks. The Prague flash-backs are more straightforwardly described, for here, perhaps, reality is itself strange and strong enough. These episodes are in some ways the nearest part of the book. Showing the political upheavals of Czechoslovakia in the last forty years (Nazi occupation, liberation by the Red Army, the Prague Spring and the Soviet invasion of August 1968) through the eyes of young Linda and her ordinarily extraordinary family, they are rich with human and documentary interest.

They are also much faster-paced than the rest of the book, and the effect is of a complete and satisfying balance between the past and present is achieved, but at a price. The point where these opposing elements are united, of course Stiflik's consciousness. Her emotional life is vividly established though its exact nature is vague (on top of emigrée alienation, sexual rigidity and general middle-agedness, she is haunted by the ghost of an unloving, toxic brother). At the start of the novel, in the throes of her "positive transference", that Freudians call "love", she is abandoned by her psychiatrist (not altogether convincingly, in view of the fascinations of hypnosis, and the tenacity of fixations), and sets off, on a pilgrimage of discovery, to a friend's holiday shack in

FRANK O'NEILL
Agents of Sympathy
303pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £9.95.
0340 385952

KGB, headline PLO and Libyans cook up a Machiavellian plot to unseat monarchy in fictional pro-Western North African state of Berbia. In the process framing the Barbican army and its American advisors with an act of monstrous infamy. Giovanni Stearn, Irish-American investment consultant and part-time CIA lean investigator, plays the hero's role. Powerful and persuasive political thriller, which is perhaps most convincing in dealing with the Washington pinko-liberal scene, though the Swiss (French and North African episodes are well conceived and executed. Some episodes, however, are very strong meat indeed, and not for the sensitive reader.

Confessional professions

Christopher Hawtree

J. I. M. STEWART
Parlour 4: and other stories
184pp. Gollancz. £8.95.
0575 037350

"A skilled writer could probably wring a good deal of pathos out of it", remarks the narrator of an incident which shocks a young boy in the opening, title story of *Parlour 4*. Such modesty is echoed in the closing one, "Sweets From a Stranger", where it is averred, "If I were a professional writer I could probably make a short story – a modestly sinister short story – out of the mere episode (as it were) that I propose to recount here."

Published books regularly disprove the widely-held theory that everybody "has a story in them". The confessional, if it is not to degenerate into the garrulosity of the saloon-bar, requires a more discipline, such as is achieved by J. I. M. Stewart. His professionalism allows him to assume the guise of various inexperienced narrators, young or old; he can inhabit a character within the space of a few sentences. The modestly sinister is avoided, and its place is taken by something more subtle, such as the worry felt by a young boy on holiday who, having already been made to feel guilty at cheating during a foolish game, overhears his well-bred mother hiss to his self-made father, "I tell you, Jamie, softening of the brain. If you don't stop now, within five years the whisky will have killed you." It is with as great a sob as the narrator himself feels that one later realizes that a playlet, of dubious taste, was being rehearsed for the benefit of other guests.

The outcome of "Melancolia I", to which Bilbury, a successful, polished artist is commissioned to paint a reclusive, grumpy philosopher, is clear from the beginning, but this story, too, transcends that inevitability, the old boy coming to life in a colourful, faintly tasci-vous manner that has his legs giving way "beneath him and he fell, a crumpled heap, to the floor. And Bilbury saw that his mouth was gushing blood." One of the unmodish strengths of Professor Stewart's Oxford quintet was its accommodation of the almost sentimental, which was never mawkish but of a piece with the farce, allusiveness and drama – as it is in several of these stories: "Tom, Dick and Harry" suggests frivolity, but this has to be revised as the story proceeds along its brief course and tells of the circumstances in which an adopted child (Oxbridge potential) was followed by natural twins (a good chance of the Second Eleven); Tom's reaction to the revelation of his birth, a patronizing Latin tag, is all the more shocking for the convincing good nature of his bewildered adoptive parents.

Misapplied parental wisdom, together with problems of nomenclature, makes itself felt more comically in "Napier into Finch", a tale of clumsy scheming that, far from sour, contains more *recherche* knowledge that the retired Colonel Danbury has gleaned from the Open University and with which he regales his wife, she, of a more utilitarian nature, endeavours to enrich her hard-pressed artist of a son, a proceeding that he duly greets with a quotation from Edith Sitwell.

Literary allusions, the more natural in proportion to their obscurity, are never shirked by Stewart, but the two Oxford stories here run amok. Pleasing as the idea might be of an epidemic of dyslexia in Oxford, it becomes rather too whimsical for comfort, as have the later Inner novels and, here, the tale of an unwitting campus novelist – an expiring breed quite distinct from Stewart, whose eye is essentially on the real world.

The last two of the 1985/86 Winter literary lectures organized by the National Book League in association with the Society of Authors and the Royal Overseas League will take place on February 19 (when the speaker will be M. M. Karyo) and March 19 (Fénelope Mortimer). Lectures start at 7pm and are held in St Andrew's Hall, Over-Seas House, Park Place, St James's Street London SW1; admission is £1.50.

Unconventional harmonies

David Profumo

TOM WAKEFIELD
The Discus Throwers
171pp. GMP. £9.95 (paperback, £3.95).
0907040802

From the opening sequence of Tom Wakefield's latest novel it looks as if one is to for a depressing read. At fifty-seven, Betty Hooper is ousted from her schoolteaching job by the vindictive new Head, Mrs Goodheart, and returns to her Baywater flat; a prematurely-retired, one-breasted spinster, for all the world like some dreary Barbara Pym character. As elsewhere in the book, however, all is not as it seems. Betty shares her life with two men – Bertrand Motion, a homosexual whose own life is a passionate sham, and Kenneth Trask, the former Customs and Excise man who likes to wear his pink slippers with the blue pom-poms. This is not exactly Maureen Duffy's bedsitland either.

In its gentle way, the novel suggests how socially unconventional relationships can sometimes provide strength when other things fail, but it does this without resort to shrillness or excessive grotesquerie. The surprising *ménage à trois* is a chance conjunction in a world of fairly obvious hypocrites, and it generates a warmth that is evoked through comedy as much as through tenderness. Kenneth is the bachelor brother of Betty's previous Head, and he is presented as a harmless, affectionate man who believes in life's smaller pleasures and acts as the perfectly sexless lover to his adored Betty. His only luxury is the private gratification of occasional "gear-timos", and a fondness for amateur dramas which offer the opportunity to dress up as a woman; with some entertaining consequences. It is this hobby which leads, for instance, to an invitation to the home of Judge Linden-Parry, who proceeds to cavort in front of him in a corset and spangled stockings. The closets of the Establishment appear to be well stocked with frilly nether garments, and even the disdainfully sleek Mr Roebuck (the advertising executive who interviews Bertrand when he wins a competition) has a foot on either side of the fence.

Indeed, the possibilities of any heterosexual harmony look remarkably faint, but the suggestion is not snidely put over, and the polarization of sexes is not an overriding concern. There is an exhilarating scene at a North London dinner-party, the intertwining young couple, Mike and Felicity, will make every reader – but the hostess, Diana, does at last

lover, which implies that all is not lost. His name is Bill Bluelea, and he is an English lecturer whose study of literature "had somehow impeded his enjoyment of the absurd", a considerable handicap in this particular milieu. After a lifetime spent quaking by the telephone in the forlorn hope that faithless partners might ring him up, Bertrand, for his part, finds true love in the unlikely shape of Victor, the young Welsh manager of the launderette next door, which they both proceed to beautify (to the approval of the GLC, but not the Arts Council) with paintings and classical music. Such triumphs of individualism are the keynotes of the book.

The title derives from a rousing self-piece

Accumulating anxiety

Anne Boston

ALICE ADAMS
Return Trips
195pp. Heinemann. £9.95.
0434 006327

Going back, especially to the place where you were happiest, is usually a mistake, as more than one character discovers during the course of these stories by the American author of the novel *Superior Women*. The strongest after-image is left by the story "Molly's Dog", in which a "dowily retired screen writer" makes a "return trip" to Carmel, where she often stayed with lovers in the past. But this time she is going with her gay friend Sandy, and she realizes beforehand that she is wrong to go; not because the place has changed but because she has. Now, older but little wiser, she finds herself literally dogged by a mongrel which, befriending them on the beach, gallops desperately after her car as they drive off. "But why didn't we go back for the dog?" she can't help crying later – provoking a final argument with Sandy, and the painful surfacing of regrets for a lifetime's missed opportunities.

Alice Adams is a confirmatory rather than a revelatory writer. Summing up, not surprising, are the essence of these brief lives called into account by cutting from present to past and back. Several stories cover a decade or more, and require a fair amount of background detail, making them more like preliminary sketches for novels.

The title story, for instance, starts maybe fifteen years ago with the narrator, first, most intense love affair, doomed by a fatal illness

wherein the retirement ceremony of Mrs Goodheart is systematically disrupted by Betty's friends, and, as revenge is seen to be done, her yellow beret is whirled like a discus over the disorder. The reasonable reaction against conformity and officialdom that characterizes the group which gathers so loyally around Betty is everywhere handled by Wakefield with a light touch, and his sensitivity is further in evidence when it is revealed that she is dying of cancer. Kenneth's later devotion to her as she shrivels locomotively towards her death seems natural in its context. It is a measure of Wakefield's achievement that pathos and comedy are run so consistently together, and that he makes the confluence seem easy.

childhood in the South, which she loved despite her mother's unhappiness; shifts briefly to her two marriages; and one ends with the unplanned visit to her childhood home which has evoked all these memories. This is a lot of ground to cover in twenty pages, and Adams is driven to explain almost apologetically through her narrator:

A very wise woman who is considerably older than I am told me that in her view relationships with people to whom we have been very close can continue to change even after the deaths of those people, and for me I think this has been quite true, with my mother, and in quite another way with Paul.

Adams is interested in old age; the accumulation of experience fits her theme, and her elderly characters are also her liveliest. In "Waiting for Stella" a group of old people wait for Stella's husband, who is very late for lunch, a few weeks after her death; always irritatingly over the top in life, now she insistently reminds them of their own mortality through her absence. Elsewhere, Adams's assessment of the "emotional reality of women's lives today", as the blurb would have it, is characterized by a kind of defensive introversion; one character describes herself as a depressive, and anxiety is often the dominant emotion.

After *Superior Women*, the landscape of *Return Trips* (Alice Adams's first short story collection to be published here) is disappointingly flat. In the absence of humour, sensitive observation and accurate description are not enough to compensate for a prevailing sameness of tone. Perhaps this is partly a result of the way the book was conceived – short stories written to a theme are liable to turn into a series of exercises, consciously designed to fit the writer's mould. It is a pity that the

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Letters

Spender's 'Journals'

Sir, - Peter Robb's letter of January 24 makes rather heavy weather of the unclouded rhetoric of Joseph Brodsky's extrication of Stephen Spender from Ian Hamilton's grim clutches (Letters, December 27). Of course writers can set traps for their predecessors, and it's insensitive of Robb to ask why they would do this just after quoting Brodsky's suggestion that it is done by each generation to postulate an "aesthetics and ethics superior to those of the now grey".

What troubles me most about Hamilton's characteristic labour of belittlement is that in a *Sunday Times* interview (December 29), he proposed that

If I had tried to do with Stephen Spender on television what I tried to do in the *TLS* it would have been a pretty peculiar show. I was taking a fairly negative line in the review and if I had taken a similar line, at similar length, on television it would, I'm sure, have come across as gratuitously malicious and unpleasant. There would have been something indecent about it.

Well, yes, it would, there would; it seems odd, though, that Hamilton assumes that his review as published did not come across to precisely this effect he acknowledges it would have done "live".

Another of the points Robb elicits from Brodsky's letter, the "approval of love that is not an investment", is indeed something "it would be hard not to share". In vindicating the uniqueness of "Spender's life in letters" Brodsky was, *poco* Robb, saying something about Spender's poems, a relatively uncommon number of which clearly evidence such love. And if one does feel this to be an unimpeachably decent quality, is there not by a similar token, something profoundly indecent about the crafted despicability that is an investment, whether it speaks openly on television or more insidiously in print?

MICHAEL HOROVITZ,
Piedmont, Blythe, Stroud, Gloucestershire.

'Jesus through the Centuries'

Sir, - The aporism that Christianity began with a pun (Letters, January 3) is unfortunately based on a misunderstanding.

The name "Peter" (Aramaic, *kefa*, or in the New Testament form, "Cephas") was a title conferred on Simon precisely in order to confirm the rock-like status accorded him by Jesus. Thus Jesus was not punning on a name that Simon happened to have from birth, in the

Community Rule of the Qumran sect, the Council is called "that tried wall, that precious corner-stone". The reference is to Isaiah 28: 16, "I am laying a stone in Zion, a block of granite, a precious corner-stone for a firm foundation".

It was evidently a common practice, when appointing someone to a position of great trust, to stress the rock-like permanence of the appointment (probably just because such positions were usually precarious). A good example is the appointment of Eliakim the son of Hilkiah (Isaiah 22: 19-23). This passage throws great light on the appointment of Simon by Jesus to the position and title of "Peter":

And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah: and I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place.

The parallels are very striking, and they indicate that Jesus was not appointing Simon to be the first pope of his Church (for Jesus never envisaged founding a Church), but to be the prime minister or vizier of his kingdom, which, as Davidic king, he hoped to set up in his capital, Jerusalem.

HYAM MACCOBY,
Leo Baeck College, Sternberg Centre for Judaism,
Manor House, 80 East End Road, London N3.

Disease and the Novel

Sir, - In his skilfully crafted review of Jeffrey Meyers's *Disease and the Novel, 1880-1960* (December 13), Iain McGilchrist shows himself to be a better literary critic than doctor. Disease, in McGilchrist's allusive but clinically impoverished vision, is "impenetrable", "arbitrary", a form of "senseless suffering". A "meaningless random event" for the reviewer-cum-student-physician, "disease itself teaches nothing", it cannot be "interpreted". For either the seasoned practitioner or the serious ethnographer of the work of doctoring, this is a howler, albeit a positively dangerous one for the care of patients. McGilchrist has clearly read much more about patients in literature than he has seen patients in real life. Or else he wouldn't use acute disorder as his test case for essaying the place of meaning in the experience of sickness, or, worse yet, imply that a machine model of distress - the deeply flawed traditional biomedical model that has played such havoc with modern patient care - can have more

humane benefits than a hermeneutic one.

There are no less than three serious mis-understandings in McGilchrist's accusation that novelists inappropriately transform "disease" into symbol, thereby, following Susan Sontag's misleading argument, intensifying the patient's experience of guilt and shame. First, "disease" in professional terminology has come narrowly to denote the biological abnormality underlying symptoms; "illness", which McGilchrist confuses with disease, designates the patient's (and family's) perception, experience, communication and coping with symptoms; hence, illness is the appropriate symbolic subject. Second, the author denies the interpretative process central to both the patient's cognitive awareness of bodily change and the doctor's work of translating the language of disease (symptoms) into the language of disease (signs), i.e. diagnosis. Third, McGilchrist reifies "disease" as a thing in nature (an epidemiologist's vision of radically secular, material and random processes to boot), failing to note that diseases are historically derived, mutable models of disordered biological processes, hence, social (read, meaning-laden) constructs. But then again, in McGilchrist's romantic vision, cosmos is some wild, natural source of disorder, not the socially constituted order that several generations of anthropologists of religion and historians of science have disclosed.

Anthropologically and historically, *poco* McGilchrist, there are no peoples, no epochs for which illness is meaningless. Illness has meaning in at least four different senses. The newer semiotic question of how illness has meaning is prior to the older therapeutic one of what it means. First, there is the meaning of symptoms *quo* symptomata. The language of illness is learned and differs for different cultures and sometimes even families. We are able not only subtly to convey pain, distress, disability differently (there is after all a rhetoric to complaint), but those differences make a difference in how family members, employers and health professionals respond. Illness apocryphs are inseparable from social processes of communication and negotiation that constitute our life world. One of these conversations is with practitioners, whose interpretation of illness as disease occurs on this first level. Second, certain illnesses convey culturally salient meaning in particular societies (eg, leprosy in early and medieval European society, tuberculosis in nineteenth and early twentieth-century Europe, neurasthenia in the late nineteenth-century North America, *latah* in Malaysia, AIDS in the West at present). In this second sense, illness *brings* particular (often stigmatiz-

ing) meaning to the patient and her circle. Illness has meaning in a third sense. For chronic illness, as it becomes intimately intertwined with our lives, acts like a sponge soaking up the personal and interpersonal significance that constitute our life world. For example, disease, diabetes, asthma, psoriasis, cancer, chronic disorders are part of the symbolic fabric (the sociosomatic dialectic) that connects bodily processes to the social world. It not contributing to the genesis of disorder, *contra* McGilchrist's assertion they also do - social class, ethnicity, social role, coping processes, attributions of threats and loss, demoralization influence the course of disease and treatment outcome. In a fourth sense, illness has meaning with respect to the expressed understandings that actors in an illness episode articulate and the unexpressed interests implicit in their models: not only the explanatory models of patients and families that explain why sickness has occurred and what should be done, or those of practitioners and researchers, that tell us why the problem is intractable (financial, personal, theoretical), but even those of reviewers for the *TLS*. Skilled practitioners draw on these different types of meanings to offer more appropriate care in the chronically ill. Ethnographies of medical systems cross-culturally indicate that the significance of illness as symbol, *cum* social relations contribute to healing rituals and relationships as a core component of the therapeutic process. So much for novelists illegitimately imposing meaning on their disorders.

ARTHUR KLEINMAN,
Department of Anthropology, Harvard University,
William James Hall, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138.

Anna Freud

Sir, - Both Peter Loewenberg (Letters, December 27) and I have mistaken the date of Freud's analysis of his daughter first based on public knowledge. As far as I can ascertain, information appeared in Paul Rosen's *Brother Anna* (New York, 1969, p100), which had cited a number of private sources including Anna's brother, Martin Freud.

However, let us not lose sight of the point. Issue, Anna Freud's analysis by her father was not discussed at the Symposium on Child Analysis organized by Ernest Jones in 1962.

PHYLLIS GROSSKURTH,
New College, University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada.

AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 263

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than February 21. A prize of £20 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most nearly correct - in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration. Entries, marked "Author, Author 263" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on February 28.

1 Above his ripe red cheeks, his forehead was naturally white, like marble. A queerly cut fringe of dark grey hair lay across it, compact thick and heavy. After a moment's examination, I realized, with extreme interest, that he was wearing a wig.

2 The disfigure of her head and face was the next object of his attention. She fitted and arranged the grey wig with the dexterity which constant practice had given her.

3 "Mind and matter," said the lady in the wig, "glide with into the vortex of humanity. How the sublime and subtle sleeps the calm ideal."

Competition No 265

Winner: Stephen Rumsby.

Answers:
1 First you shall see the man in order to see
State and then learn, when both the side are met
The House well distinguished; in the game
Some men entrapped and taken, to their shame
Reward by their... and in the close

You shall see check-mate given to virtue's King
Thomas Middleton, Prologue to "A Case is Made"

2 While our armies differ they move and led to
The victor is a cypher once the war is won
Choose your gambit, vary the tactics of your game
You move in a closed ambit that always stays the same

Louis MacNeice, "Chess".

3 Still These are chess people you play with
Still figures of ivory
Sylvia Plath, "The Swan"

INFORMATION, PLEASE

Lady Cole, author of *A Lady's Tale*, *Monte Rose* (London, 1859); any line for a biographical sketch to be published in the *Italian translation* of the book.

Isabella Fitzwilliam Maria...
Via della Farmacia 7, Rome 00185, Italy

Richard Thomas Moore (1856-1906), the painter who studied at Elmhurst Academy, exhibited at the 1880s of oils, watercolours and present where or other material for the correspondence exhibition at the National Gallery, Ireland.
Pratt Gallery, Ireland, Merrion Square, Dublin, Republic of Ireland.

'Shall I Die?'

Sir, - The discussion of "Shall I die?" has not touched on the incongruity of the *topoi* in the first half (vv 1-4) with the second. Medieval poets would have termed it a cockatrice, made by sewing half a capon to half a sucking pig. The first half has its parallel in lyrics (as was shown by Erica Sbeen and Jeremy Maule in their letter published in your issue of January 17) and, besides the *schemo*, its rhythm suits the metre (the metre was used by Purcell for his song about swains on the plains). The Blazon or catalogue of charms set in a dream vision is more formal, not well suited either to the metre or to singing; and this half is much more corrupt. In part 1, the word "suspicious", hard to sing, might be taken to apply to the whole product.

Chapman translated from the French of Olier Durant the very explicit Blazon of *The Amorous Zodiac*; Jones supplies one in *The Wives Garden* of 1610, and a rustic parody appears nearer the date of Ravi poet MS 160, in Suckling's "Ballad of a Wedding". Whereas the closest parallel to debating in part 1 is Sidney's Second Song in *Astrophel and Stella*, which is sung by Falstaff as he accosts Mistress Ford: "Have I caught my heavenly jewel?" (*Merry Wives of Windsor* 3.3.40).

Surely a song handed round for perhaps fifty years, and given a second part (where the language feels to me much later, more Caroline), is irreconcilable for Shakespeare as the lost play *Cardenio*, supposedly behind a play by Devald published in 1728, as based on older MSS.

M.C. BRADBROOK,
21 Chatterton Road, Cambridge.

Sir, - I. A. Shapiro (Letters, December 27) makes a number of valuable suggestions for detailed analysis of "Shall I die?" and of Bodleian MS Rawl poet 160 in relation to the (im)probability of Shakespeare's authorship, but his conclusion that Malone and Chambers must have studied the poem and rejected Shakespeare's authorship because they did not mention it is a compound non sequitur of some magnitude.

THOMAS CLAYTON,
386 Portland Avenue, St Paul, Minnesota 55104.

Gary Taylor's reply to earlier comment on his subject, in the *TLS* and elsewhere, appears on pages 123-4.

The Brothers Adam

Sir, - In my letter of January 10 I noted some of the misleading statements in Joseph and Anne Rykwert's recent book on Robert and James Adam and showed how it largely ignored the brothers' later works. In a strangely patronizing reply (January 17) the Rykwerts totally ignore my second point and try to play down the first by hinting that I am mistaken. The "only" mistake they mention concerns Moor Park. I said this was not an Adam house and advised that the house does not appear in the list of Adam works given in Colvin's dictionary of architects (this list is actually reprinted as an appendix to the Rykwerts' book). The main point of their book says it is an Adam house and Rykwert insists it is because its tapestry room contains famous Adam furniture in it. Alas, it is yet another misleading statement, partly on account of the use of the present tense (the most designed tapestries and the furniture removed from the house back in 1784), and more importantly because, as the Rykwerts rightly pointed out in their book (p 111), the designs for the furniture in this very room are "almost certainly... not done by Adam".

AVD M. KING,
Greenough Way, Epsom, Dugbians, Perthshire.

It David N. King (Letters, January 10) read my review with as much care as he applied to checking statements in the Rykwerts' book he would have found both enthusiasm for Alastair Rowan's publication and recognition of the importance of the Adams' late eighteenth-century works. He might also have read the lines of what it was possible to say, as available in my final two paragraphs.

In fairness to the Rykwerts I must say I have never thought of Moor Park as an Adam house and it does not seem to me that they do so either. As for the total loss of the Adelphi, I stand by my statement within its context, whatever fragments of masonry may or may not survive.

Finally, I have to admit that not all the numerous Scottish architectural historians known to me personally live north of the border.

KERRY DOWNES,
Department of History of Art, The University,
London Road, Reading.

'Luftwaffe'

Sir, - There may be another reason for the strangely poor output of aircraft in Germany during the Second World War, mentioned by R. J. Overy when reviewing Williamson Murray's book *Luftwaffe* (January 10).

I visited an Austrian friend of mine in Graz in 1950, whom I had known since the 1930s. He owned a family metal fabrication business in Graz and told me some of his wartime experiences as a manufacturer.

At the outbreak of the war he had been instructed to switch the factory to making components for the Junkers JU52 transport aeroplanes. About the middle of the war he got further instructions to stop work for the JU52, which was being phased out, and to retool for parts for a different plane. This involved a temporary halt to production. He was told immediately to report to his local Gauleiter to say why production had stopped, so he explained his orders direct from Luftwaffe headquarters in Berlin. He was dispatched with a flea in his ear and told to revert to making the JU52 parts so as not to upset the production records of the *Gau*. For good measure he was informed that he took his orders from the Gauleiter and not from Berlin.

The next step was a furious letter from Berlin asking why he had not carried out their orders. In due course a Luftwaffe general with his staff flew in and met the Gauleiter face to face across the table in my friend's office in the factory. The result of a stand-up row was that the Gauleiter won and the factory continued to turn out JU52 components, which were checked and entered on the production records and then scrapped immediately.

Later in the war the Luftwaffe decided that the factory situation, only 200 metres from Graz railway station, was too vulnerable and issued orders that the plant was to be moved to a shadow factory some distance from Graz and camouflaged in well-wooded country. But the new situation was in a different *Gau* from the local *Gau*. Again the Graz Gauleiter intervened and forbade the move on the grounds that he would lose credit for the output of the factory and the neighbouring Gauleiter would gain.

While the wrangling was going on the American air force attacked Graz station and the factory was completely destroyed.

I wonder how typical these incidents were of the animosity between Nazi bureaucrats and the Luftwaffe.

B. WEBB WARE,
Stoberry Cottage, Graftham, Peterborough, Sussex.

Travellers' Tales

Sir, - I was greatly astonished to see a sixty-year-old hoax still being perpetuated in Eric Newby's *A Book of Travellers' Tales*, as well as in James Campbell's review of this book (December 27). In spite of the fact that the authenticity of "Buffalo Child Long Lance" has repeatedly been disproved, most recently and certainly conclusively by Donald B. Smith in *Long Lance: The true story of an imposter* (Toronto, 1982).

"Long Lance" was born Silvester C. Long in North Carolina in 1890. His parents were freed slaves of mixed ethnicity, with possibly a small part Cherokee blood. After a childhood in ghetto-like conditions, Long joined the army and served with distinction in the First World War. Back in the United States he worked as a journalist, in which capacity he visited the Blackfoot Indians in western Canada. Though he stayed with them for only ten days, he was adopted by one of their chiefs and he assembled a lot of information, mostly through interviews, about their customs.

Letters

Having returned to the East, he started to write articles on these Indians, as well as at times acting the part of a true Blackfoot, whereupon he became the rage of New York and was invited to join the Explorers' Club. As a consequence of his success as an Indian, Long began increasingly to exploit the character "Long Lance", and was also commissioned to write a children's book on Indian life. The publishers, however, added the subtitle "An autobiography", and the author went along with this. The book was born. The book was a great success, and there have been many reissues and translations up until our own day. No doubt the endorsement of the book by one of the most respected anthropologists in the United States at the time, Paul Radin, who strongly favoured native autobiographical accounts and hence was easily misled, helped it to become accepted.

The book's success, however, nearly proved to be the undoing of Long Lance. When he was asked to participate in an "authentic" Hollywood film on Indian life, one of the co-actors, an ethnic Sioux, became suspicious and managed to find out the truth. This made little impact, however, and hardly any at all on the sales of the book.

Silvester Long / "Long Lance" died by his own hand a couple of years later, in 1932. But his "autobiography" still seems to survive as a testimony of the life of a "Stone Age" Indian (whatever that may have meant in early twentieth-century North America), despite its proven falsity. But perhaps its existence tells us more about ourselves than it does about "them", the "others", about our gullibility, our fascination with that figment of our imagination, the noble or unspoiled savage.

BOSSE HOLMGVIST,
St Paulsgatan 35B, Stockholm, Sweden.

Byzantine Lead Seals

Sir, - My attention has been drawn to the letter from A. M. Bryer which appeared in your issue of December 20. Permit me to make the following points:

1. The creation of this collection, which surpasses in importance those of Schlumberger and Lihaev, was entirely the work of one man, my late husband George Zacos. This was the second Byzantine sigillographic collection formed by him during his lifetime, the first now being in Dumbarton Oaks and still in its original envelopes with his annotations.

2. On numerous occasions, the most distinguished Byzantine sigillographer of the present century, Père V. Laurent, had begged my husband to collaborate with him in publishing a complete corpus of Byzantine seals. Père Laurent's letters are in my possession and Professor Bryer is free to consult them should he so wish.

3. Mr Vegliery was a salaried employee of my late husband, who valued, in particular, his knowledge of English. It was entirely due to my late husband's generosity that Mr Vegliery's name appeared on the first volume.

4. Mr Vegliery himself, in a letter to Manolis Chatzidakis, who wrote the introduction to the second volume, dissociated himself from the way in which this volume had been put together, from which Professor Chatzidakis concluded that the original manuscript was not the work of Mr Vegliery.

5. Professor Bryer is not the only scholar to have received an approach from Mr Vegliery; many others were similarly approached, but were well aware that the original manuscript was entirely the work of George Zacos.

In view of the above, I would have thought it scarcely becoming for Professor Bryer to present himself in the role of devil's advocate.

JANET ZACOS,
Hotel Drei Könige, Blumenrain 8, 4001 Basel, Switzerland.

Jacopa Bellini: *The Louvre album of drawings* by Bernhard Degenhart and Annegret Schmitt, reviewed in the *TLS* of December 27, was published in the UK on January 24 by Boydell and Brewer at £60.

Christopher Alexander: *The search for a new paradigm in architecture* by Stephen Crabow (January 3) is published in the UK at £15 by Oriel Press of Stockfield, Northumberland, and distributed by Routledge and Kegan Paul.

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Basil Blackwell

108 Cornhill Road, Oxford OX1 1JF
Basil 1906, 452 Park Avenue South, New York NY 10016

Factors of change

Jonathan Keates

REINHARD STROHM
Essays on Handel and Italian Opera
303pp. Cambridge University Press. £30.
0521 264286

With a disarming modesty Reinhard Strohm warns us, in his preface, that "the reader should not expect too much from information collected over so short a period, from conclusions drawn in such haste". Anyone familiar with his work in the field of Handel studies will already know what to expect - information of impressive density and a willingness to float adventurous conclusions. That one recent writer on Handel should patronizingly have dubbed him "the invaluable Reinhard Strohm" is, however hell-telling, understandable from at least one aspect: it is hard to think of any scholar in his field who can so concisely tell us what we need to know while simultaneously

exciting us with the prospect of there being more to discover.

The field itself is hardly well trodden. *Opera seria* is, perhaps by its very nature, the only area of what is loosely termed "early", "pre-classical" or "baroque" music not to have benefited either from the recording industry or from the remarkable extensions of the performing repertoire which have developed during the last two decades. Few if any of us are likely to hear complete performances of Leonardo Vinci's *Didone abbandonata* (1726) or Francesco Gasparini's *Astionotte* (1722) - two of the operas covered in detail by Professor Strohm - and there is a good number of students and amateurs who would be content not to hear a note of either.

For the genre, it hardly needs saying, has proved notoriously difficult to bring to life. Its improvisatory and haphazard qualities, its accumulations of artifice and formula, its continued assault on the canons of realism and authenticity and its superficial remoteness

from the everyday are all disturbing to our more rigidly orthodox views of what an opera ought to be. Objections are made, sometimes quite reasonably, to the important element of plain recitative between the airs, complaints are levelled at the paucity of ensembles, and the standard form of the da capo aria is frequently condemned merely for being the thing it is. Audiences prepared to sit devoutly through *Parafal*, *Don Corlas* or *Les Troyens* recoil instinctively from the demands made upon their powers of concentration by Handel and Vivaldi.

However much we may pride ourselves on our understanding of the eighteenth century, the values of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* continue to be applied, with ingenious blindness, to appraising the overall worth of its art-forms. In their essentially fluid character, which ensured that no performance guaranteed a faithful replica of its predecessor and that structural alterations were not merely permissible but desirable and even expected, the operas resemble the most aleatoric of four contemporary artistic modes.

This factor of change is emphasized in Strohm's most accessible essay, "Towards an understanding of opera seria", which underlines the role of the librettist in providing a solid base from which individual musico-dramatic works could be evolved, and justly observes that "nowadays producers, singers and even musical scholars and editors alike suffer from insufficient understanding of the literary components of the drama per musica and an insufficient knowledge of the metres of Italian poetry and even of the language itself".

Drama - and, by implication, its learned poets, Metastasio, Zeno, Salvi and others - came a decided first, submitted to public scrutiny in the form of a printed libretto, delivered via musical recitation. A single text might

undergo a score of different settings, all of them involving adjustment. Thus practically all of Handel's operas make use of libretti already in circulation, some of them, such as *Admetus*, *Serse*, of venerable antecedents, investigated thoroughly in Strohm's exhaustive coverage of the composer's textual material, here made available in English for the first time.

Yet, as he goes on to show, the disapproval of those myths which have hitherto absorbed from a fully responsible approach to eighteenth-century musical drama involves a serious challenge to the idea of any all-encompassing Italian Baroque convention. The *libretto* is the product of all these studies, a demonstration of scholarly virtuosity, on Vivaldi's career as an opera producer (including a complete breakdown of productions, singers and librettos) enforces a view of the composer's operas put in terms of available dramatic or stylistic options under given circumstances, rather than placing it against some notional code of practice, its departures from which may be held to earn our approval.

So wilfully, indeed, has so much of this creative achievement been dismissed or almost hid at several significant talents have been shut out from the empyrean of musicology. Leonardo Vinci, on whom a chapter is included, was a case in point: a direct contemporary and teacher of Pergolesi, he achieved a humorous renown as a seminal influence on the development of a type of opera in which he realized the identity projected by the text. Thus when Strohm describes the *Didone* Vinci's abandoned Dido as one which "pates that of Mozart's Countess in Figaro" a solitary woman worrying about her funeral, appealing to heaven, but never losing her eternal clarity of mind" the instructive force of the comparison makes us deplore the lack of immediate access to the work as a whole.

Old friends

William Drabkin

DENIS MATTHEWS
Beethoven
279pp. Dent. £12.95.
0460 031783

In recent years the Master Musicians *Beethoven* has gone through two phases. In 1973, Jack Westrup undertook a thorough overhauling of the bibliography and list of works in Marion M. Scott's original book, first published in 1934; he brought both these appendices up to date with the first fruits of the "new wave" of Beethoven research. In the decade since then an unprecedented amount of research into Beethoven's character and personality, together with some microscopic examination of his sketchbooks, has led to a far more complex picture of the most triumphant composer of the West. We were kept informed, by way of articles made up of careful research and profound psychological insight, of each stage of Maynard Solomon's portrait of Beethoven as man and artist; and a large hand of sketchbook fanatics, armed with magnifying glasses, ultraviolet lamps and watermark readers, have succeeded in reconstructing and interpreting the musical thoughts and decisions that went into the making of many of his most beloved works. It is hardly surprising, then, that what Denis Matthews has described in his preface as a "familiar and much-loved volume" which "has won countless friends over the years" is no longer serviceable in this "age of academic precision".

If the time seems ripe for a new Master Musicians *Beethoven*, the publication in book form of Solomon's researches (1977) and of the Beethoven entry by Alan Tyson and Joseph Kerman for *The New Grove* (whose publishers made it available as a separate title in 1983) are clearly difficult acts to follow. The author of the new book, a concert pianist and former Professor of Music at the University of New-castle upon Tyne, is a leader among thinking Beethoven interpreters, able to bring wide-ranging experience as performer and teacher to bear on this study. He rightly devotes the longest chapters to piano music, string quartets and symphonies. His praise of the master-

pieces avoids reaching for the tired clichés of previous summaries of the composer's labours, and his comments on the lesser works (for example, the chamber music for winds) are equally well judged, especially when they are readily compared with Mozartian models.

But this is not a scholarly book and its shortcoming lies in its failure to take account of - or even to have much to do with the impressive record of recent Beethoven research. The author already hints at this in the preface, where he plainly states that he has aimed a good deal lower than Solomon, biographer, Kerman as analyst, or Tyson as all-round scholar. But by developing his theme from an older tradition of writings on Beethoven, and all but ignoring the achievements of younger musicologists, his work hardly reflects the great strides taken since the appearance of the book it replaces. Many of the Beethoven anecdotes we have grown up with have been shown to be unfounded; more Anton Schindler's biographical tradition has been proved to be highly misleading, and the complete fabrication. But since the long-accepted picture of Beethoven the mad genius, ideas about the music so well, he seems reluctant to give it up. Even Solomon's more tentative approach to the "madness" of Beethoven, as described by the author, is not so much a new interpretation of the "madness" of Beethoven as a new interpretation of the "madness" of Beethoven.

The bibliography is in many ways less up to date than that in Westrup's *Beethoven*, which judiciously avoided over-enthusiasm for the too sketchbooks published in facsimile or transcription, and no mention whatever of the new edition of the Beethovenhaus (Boon) in the field. The sing commits seem to be the product of a mistrust of, and misinformation about, the field of analytic investigation. The *Beethoven Essays in Musical Analysis* is a muddled despite their title, and is clearly difficult acts to follow. The author of the new book, a concert pianist and former Professor of Music at the University of New-castle upon Tyne, is a leader among thinking Beethoven interpreters, able to bring wide-ranging experience as performer and teacher to bear on this study. He rightly devotes the longest chapters to piano music, string quartets and symphonies. His praise of the master-

Untransposable

Christopher Peacocke

MALCOLM BUDD
Music and the Emotions: The philosophical theories
190pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £14.95.
07102 05201

"Music," wrote Stravinsky, "is, by its very nature, essentially powerless to express anything at all." This statement may well seem to be magnificently falsified by virtually everything Stravinsky ever composed. But as Stravinsky later made clear, what he meant to convey by his remark was this: that the value and significance of a composition go beyond its success in expressing certain feelings, and the goal of the composer is by no means exhausted by a verbal specification of some emotion he seeks to express in music. To suppose that it is so exhausted, Stravinsky perceptively added, is to debase both words and music.

Malcolm Budd would agree with this real message of Stravinsky's. In *Music and the Emotions*, after an initial chapter on the nature of emotions, he considers previous theories of the relations between the two subjects mentioned in his title. Some theories say there is no essential connection between the value of music and the emotions; others assert there is such a connection, and aim to explain what it is. Budd considers several theories of each of these two types, and finds them all wanting. It is regrettable that such an acute philosopher does not offer a positive theory of his own; but in the course of his discussion, he does highlight the emerging conditions of adequacy which any acceptable theory must fulfil. His intention is to be intelligible to anyone who appreciates music. This intention he achieves, though a reader unacquainted with analytical philosophy may find the text a little dry.

Budd's careful critique of previous theories is devastating. Eduard Hanslick claimed that the use of emotion terms in characterizing music is either eliminable or improper. On his view, a composition can legitimately be described as sad if it is soft and slow, since a sad person speaks softly and slowly. Budd simply notes that music can be soft and slow without being sad. He also wonders how Hanslick could possibly eliminate the use of a term such as "melancholy" in characterizing Mozart's Masonic Funeral Music. Carroll Pratt said that music can be correctly described as possessing

an emotional quality if it moves in the way one who has that emotion moves. Budd notes that there are no bodily movements specific to sadness among the various forms of unhappiness. Edmund Gurney - author of *The Power of Sound* (1880) and a penetrating thinker on other aspects of music - said that for music to have an emotional quality it has to arouse the emotion in the listener. Budd observes that a minor triad sounded immediately after the corresponding major triad sounds melancholy to us, and this need not involve the creation of melancholy in us. We could add in support that the first time Leopold Mozart heard a melancholy work by his son, it may well have created paternal joy in him.

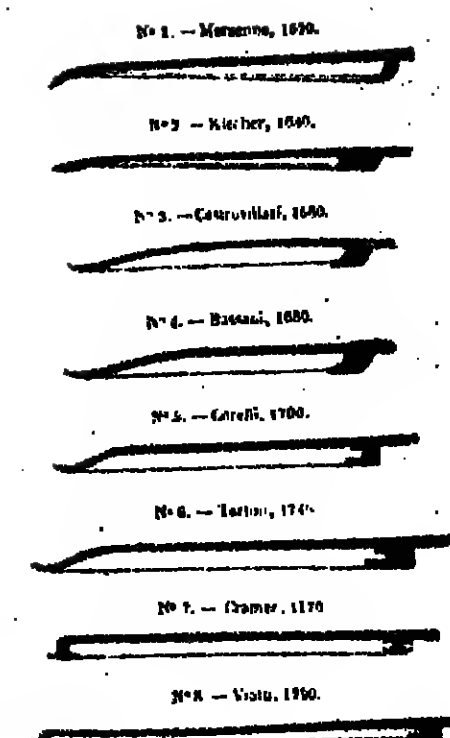
The only writer who would have a reasonable reply to some of Budd's criticisms is Leonard Meyer. Meyer offered a complex theory which relates musical meaning to the information carried by the music. One of Meyer's ideas is that as a work is played, the listener develops expectations about which continuations are most probable (carry the least information); in meaningful music, something less probable than the listener expects occurs. Budd effectively criticizes many features of Meyer's theory, but one of his criticisms seems to me not to stick. Budd asserts that it is a consequence of Meyer's theory that with repeated hearings the unexpected becomes expected, and so musical significance must decrease as the composition becomes more familiar. However Meyer himself formulated his claims, there is a theory very close to his that does not have this consequence. There is certainly such a state as having the impression that the music will take a certain turning while knowing that it will not: this is a state one can be in when hearing a highly familiar work. The fact is that such impressions are, in a sense familiar in contemporary philosophy of mind, independent of the subject's beliefs. A belief-independent impression that the music will develop a certain way is no more intrinsically problematic than a vivid visual impression that there is a telephone in front of oneself, an impression which can exist even when the subject knows that he is merely seeing an excellent hologram. If a Meyer-like theory is to be given a fair run for its money, it ought to be construed as a theory of the unconscious, sub-personal computations which determine the nature of a listener's impressions, rather than his beliefs. While Meyer may have overestimated it, the role of information-theoretic con-

siderations in the perception of music ought not to receive quite so rapid a dismissal as Budd's.

The most interesting of Budd's requirements for a better theory of musical expression is that it avoid what he calls "the heresy of the separable experience". Any theory according to which the value of music depends upon the effect it produces had better specify an effect which could not occur without the experience of music. For if it fails to do so, it will be open to the objection that the effect it does specify could occur outside the experience of music. It would follow that some non-musical phenomenon could have the same value for us as music; yet, as Budd says, it is clear that music could not be displaced in this kind of way from the position it occupies in the life of those capable of appreciating it. This important argument is quite general: it applies whether the effect in question is an emotion, an imagining, or anything else. The cogency and generality of the point are among the reasons it has proved so hard to give a better theory.

Budd's critique ought to lead us to reject the claim that hearing a composition as having a certain emotional quality can be defined as some compound of other familiar mental states. Hearing a piece of music as wistful, or euphoric, or solemn, is definitionally a primitive state. This is not to say that one cannot theorize about such states. Their conceptual relations to other states need elucidation, as do their empirical psychological properties. One major recourse, when faced with such a fascinating and recalcitrant phenomenon as the experience of music, is to consider systematically apparently parallel phenomena in other sense-modalities and other art forms. Budd omits any such consideration, but it can help.

Consider, for instance, the experience of seeing a very late Rothko painting as sombre. This has analogues of all the characteristic features of the musical case. The painting succeeds in expressing a sombre mood; but we can be certain that no sombre person has ever looked like a late Rothko. Nor can we simply identify seeing the painting as sombre with its causing the viewer to imagine, from the inside, being in a sombre mood. Someone may see a cheerful painting as cheerful, but, because of its unhappy personal association, it may cause him to imagine being in a sombre mood. Thus the need to avoid the fallacy of the separable experience is as pressing for painting as it is for music. It is plausible, though, that imagining



Violin bows (about 1620-1790) as illustrated by François Joseph Féas. They are reproduced from Robin Stowell's *Violin Technique and Performance Practice in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries in the Cambridge Musical Texts and Monographs series* (411pp. Cambridge University Press. £45. 0521 232791). Before 1750 it was uncommon for bow makers to stamp their names on bows, but some illustrations to eighteenth-century treatises show bows named after well-known performers. For example, the eighteenth-century Italian sonata bow was known as the "Cordell bow".

from the inside experiencing a certain emotion is a necessary condition for perceiving a painting or musical composition as having that emotional quality. In the fact of the irreducibility of experiencing a painting or music as sombre to its causing the perceiver to imagine being in a sombre mood (or indeed to anything else) we already have an explanation of the following possibility: that some music and paintings are valuable for their experienced effects, while nevertheless those very experiences could not occur outside these art forms. Should anyone who takes the value of music to be *sub specie* *generis* ask for more?

Russell was a non-cognitivist in his metaphysics. Where he differs from those who accept the consensus is in part in his refusal to separate the philosopher from the person. The evidence he offers includes not only less well-known philosophical writings by Russell (such as early reviews of works on Spinoza) but also personal correspondence (for instance with Lady Ottoline Morrell). He is right to do so. For in this case at least an understanding of the person is necessary to an understanding of the philosopher. It may be that this is also true about Spinoza.

Histories of philosophy are not just interpretations of the past but engage with it in a critical way. In this sense Blackwell's book is not just intellectual biography but a work of philosophy. Yet it is clear that the author was in some quandary as to how to engage in a critical assessment of a non-cognitivist ethic such as that he attributes to Russell. He searches for criteria for such an assessment and settles in the end for a combination of Russell's criteria and his own, scarcely concealing his sense of the arbitrariness of the procedure. At the end of the book his long-standing respect for Russell's ethic is unsurprisingly confirmed. It is a pity that he did not content himself with his admirable account of what Russell's Spinozistic ethic was.

Michael Rubinstein's *Music to my Ear: Reflections on music and disquisitions on metaphysics* (194pp. Quartet. £12.95. 07043 2543 8) is an account of musical appreciation. Listening to music, he argues, may help man in an underlying mission to understand his unconscious self. Rubinstein offers a list of categories of music suited to different occasions.

Antecedent affinities

Stuart Brown

J. J. DELAHUNTY
Spinoza
317pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £25.
07102 03756
KENNETH BLACKWELL
The Spinozistic Ethics of Bertrand Russell
262pp. Allen and Unwin. £20.
004 1900081

It may be too soon to talk, as some do, of a "new historiography of philosophy". But historians of philosophy are increasingly attempting to practise their art in ways that are not sanctioned by the analytic tradition. For some, like Kenneth Blackwell, who is archivist of the Bertrand Russell Archives, approaches which require scholarly aptitudes and resources come easily enough. For those trained in the analytic tradition, however, it is one thing to sense the need for a different approach, and quite another to be able to carry it through.

R. J. Delahunty's book is a case in point. He claims to have taken "very seriously" the "platitude" that Spinoza was a seventeenth-century philosopher and not a twentieth-century one. But, in spite of his efforts, the seventeenth-century dimension of Spinoza's thought is present in only a peripheral way. Dr Delahunty is clearly much more at home in recent Anglo-American philosophy and makes his escape to it when his seventeenth-century resources run out. Faced, for instance, with the standard problems as to why Spinoza adopted the nominalistic method and how we are to understand his use of geometrical apparatus, Delahunty offers no evidence as to what Spinoza

himself thought about Euclidean geometry. He does tell us about Descartes; there is a nice quotation from Hobbes, an attempt to throw light on the matter from Wittgenstein, even a close analysis of passages from an earlier work by Spinoza. These discussions are often interesting and philosophically sophisticated. But their relevance to the central questions about Spinoza's *Ethics* which form the main agenda of the book is often problematic.

Philosophers in the analytic tradition will find false reassurance in Delahunty's book. Spinoza can be understood well enough, he supposes, if he is "read against the background of Cartesianism". Scholasticism, he implies, was part of "the old order" whose demise left a vacuum, which many new philosophies offered to fill. The successful applicant, apparently, was Cartesianism - "the dominant philosophy of the period". Indeed we do not have to bother even with the Cartesian. We will find Delahunty's Spinoza accessible even if the only earlier philosopher we have come across is Descartes. There is indeed a story to be told about the special significance of Descartes's philosophy for Spinoza, but Delahunty offers no more than a few hints as to what it might be. The hypothesis that the main context for Spinoza's philosophy is that of Descartes is not new, and neither is Delahunty's interpretation. Indeed his book unconsciously perpetuates the stereotype of Spinoza as a human being but Spinoza the philosopher is entirely alien to the stereotype Russell. Blackwell shows convincingly, however, that the actual Russell was significantly indebted to Spinoza's "intellectual love of God" and that indeed his early neo-Hegelian training had a lasting influence on him. He does not deny that

shared by Descartes and Spinoza. It is ironic because it calls in question the practices which have served to perpetuate the view of Spinoza as a Cartesian rationalist - in particular, curricula in which, apart from Descartes, all of Spinoza's antecedents (except perhaps Plato and Aristotle) are ignored.

There may be no new methodology to justify talk of a "new historiography" of philosophy. But there is a certain iconoclasm, a desire to destroy such stereotypes, together with a willingness to accept that the history of philosophy may be much more complicated than we have been led to suppose, and calls for greater historical sophistication and more scholarly equipment. If that is the trend, then Dr Delahunty's book is out of date. (It is at least six years out of date in the more straightforward sense that it owes nothing to more recent writings on Spinoza.) By contrast, Dr Blackwell's book well illustrates the virtues and some of the problems of the new historiography.

The stereotype of Russell places him in the British tradition of radical empiricism to gather with Hume, Bentham, J. S. Mill and A. J. Ayer. Analytically trained philosophers will expect him, therefore, to be either a subjectivist or a utilitarian in his ethical thinking, or perhaps to some way both. And this has indeed been the consensus of writers on Russell's ethics. Russell may have admired Spinoza as a human being but Spinoza the philosopher is entirely alien to the stereotype Russell. Blackwell shows convincingly, however, that the actual Russell was significantly indebted to Spinoza's "intellectual love of God" and that indeed his early neo-Hegelian training had a lasting influence on him. He does not deny that

as easily have argued that Shakespeare's non-dramatic canon is far smaller than Spenser's, and so have multiplied Shakespeare's non-dramatic parallels by a much larger factor.

Rather than multiply the parallels found in one concordance, it seems more helpful to multiply the number of concordances checked. I therefore compiled a list of phrases for which Robbings had not found adequate parallels outside Shakespeare; I checked this residue of parallels in the available published concordances to Sidney's poems, Jonson's, Donne's and Marvell's, and to the works of Marlowe, Herbert, Herrick and Crashaw. I could not find parallels for: "Shall I fly", "lover's haits", "arrow breeding", "sue [spelled sh-]", "in all duty", "vent my lust", "if she from", "repose us", "helping set lips met", "impair all my senses", "in her cheeks . . . beauty's banner", "high admirations", "past compare", "parts asunder", "tis a wonder", or "nature's . . . blot". I have also been unable to find parallels in these authors for several phrases I have noticed, or had pointed out to me, since December 20: 14 "Shall I send" (*Shrew* 2.2.168), 14 "Shall I tend" ("Shall I attend": *Henry* 4.1.29, *Measure* 2.2.160), 16 "my proceeding" (*Two Gentlemen* 3.3.138, *Richard III* 4.4.403), 19 "Fie away" (*Twelfth Night* 2.4.53, twice), "win of all" ("wins of all": *John* 2.1.569) and the triple collocation of *sport*, *wanton* (ly) and *fly* in lines 41-2 and *King Lear* 4.1.36-7 ("as flies to wanton boys are we to their gods: they kill us for their sport"). No doubt, a comprehensive survey of Elizabethan and Jacobean poetry would further diminish this list, but we now know that the poem shares with the Shakespeare canon twenty-two phrases or images which are relatively rare in the literary language of the period. The more works we must ransack in order to find non-Shakespearean parallels for the remaining "rare" items, the rarer the items evidently become – and the greater the probability that Shakespeare wrote the poem.

Moreover, neither Robbings, nor anyone else, has commented upon the most striking feature of all the internal evidence: its chronological consistency. In order to find alternative parallels from other authors, I have drawn upon works dating from the 1570s to the 1660s; but the poem's correspondences with Shakespeare cluster in a brief period in the 1590s. Such consistency in the internal evidence not only permits the hypothesis of Shakespearean authorship; it positively – and independently – supports the external evidence.

The sceptics have made little attempt to document or articulate any internal evidence which contradicts the Rawlinson attribution. Instead, as so often in textual issues, beneath the hard scholarly outside lurks a soft critical centre. Though Robbings explicitly recognizes that individual judgment and critical taste cannot be made the criteria of authenticity, he offers no other reasons for exiling the poem to "Spurioa", and his references to it as an "ugly duckling", and a crime of which Shakespeare must be "presumed innocent", make his unspoken critical prejudices obvious enough.

The poem's rhythms seem to have provoked most critical hostility: a friend told me it sounded more like Ogden Nash than William Shakespeare. But Elizabethans had not read Ogden Nash; they did not share our assumptions that short lines and frequent rhymes are intrinsically risible. Whether or not it was ever put to music, "Shall I die?" was written – whoever wrote it – as a song, as "Words for Music Perhaps", and once we appreciate its genre the poem's rhythm becomes "more limpid and less limp" (as Philip Brockbank has put it). Nor need such a song have been written, as Jeremy Maule and Erica Sheen suggest (*TLS* Letters, January 17), after "Shall I sue, shall I seek for grace", published with music by Dowland in 1600. Almost all scholars date "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" earlier than 1600; Shakespeare used the phrase "shall I die" at

Venus and Adonis 1074, and "shall I fly", "shall I send" and "shall I (at)tend" are also paralleled from his early work. He did not need Dowland's 1600 collection to tell him how to begin this poem.

One critic told me that "Fairest neck, no speck" provoked raucous laughter whenever he read it. (I report this reaction, without pretending to understand it.) Others, more intelligently, note that Shakespeare elsewhere mocks material which he here (apparently) takes seriously: the rhyming of "love" and "dove" (satirized at *Romeo* 2.1.10), for instance, or the rhythms of "Pyramus and Thisbe". But – as the collocation of *Romeo* with "Pyramus" itself reminds us – Shakespeare habitually treated similar material differently. The structures of most of his plays demonstrate just such a bifocal vision of human experience. Everyone knows that Shakespeare mocked "beautified" in *Hamlet*; fewer remember that he used it seriously at *Two Gentlemen* 4.1.53. Nor, given the ironies of "Shall I die?" itself, can we ignore the possibility that the author is consciously manipulating the conventionality of some of its language.

Other critics counter that Shakespeare never wrote anything (else) like "Shall I die?". But he never wrote anything else like "The Phoenix and the Turtle", or "A Lover's Complaint", or the impromptu for the Earl of Rutland; he wrote only two long mythological narrative poems, each different from the other; he wrote only one sonnet sequence (in which three of the sonnets are formally irregular).

The charge that the poem is unique coexists uneasily with the charge (equally common) that the poem contains nothing original – no "new and surprising images", as Anthony Burgess objected (*New York Times*, December 22). Can we honestly say that every Shakespeare sonnet contains new and surprising images? Anyway, consider in the fifth stanza:

As amazed, I gazed
On more than a mortal complexion.

[You] that love can prove
Such force in beauty's infection.

The word "amazed" was of course more specific than "gazed": the Yale script hyphenates it, making the compound sense "in a maze" clearer. The lady's infection is "more than mortal" – divine, fatal. Both readings are supported in the poem: we have just been told that beauty "did impair" his senses, while the beloved is "beauty's queen in earthly allusion to the (disastrous) Judgment of Paris.

The fifth stanza culminates with the "beauty's infection" – suggesting the loss of her hair in the wind, the curving face, the conventionally admired and brows; but also, paradoxically, defining the "force" through a symbol of weakness (bending, flexing, bowing). The submission takes a comic moment in *Our Friend* to suggest a paradigmatic comic in Dickens: Silas Wegg, anxiously purging his amputated leg among Mr Venus's readers ("You that love . . ."), the word "infection" also takes its dramatic sense: in "beauty's infection", the beloved and the power of the poem coalesce.

Maule and Sheen take me to task for old-fashioned obsessions with "fashion" and "style", but they are right: the loom as English literature continues to be divided in author-sized chunks, and we must decide whether certain material belongs to one chunk or another. But such power does not preclude other forms of criticism. For, all we can do is apply the same rule: "Shall I die?" that we apply elsewhere. Evidence for this poem must be more (and no less) sceptically than evidence for most of the poems tradition-ally in the Shakespeare canon: if they go. In the current state of our knowledge, "Shall I die?" must still be included in editions of Shakespeare's works which label it "Complete".

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Speaking very roughly, books of this type usually offer, in addition to various minor sermons, to do one of two things for us: the first is to employ an episode in the intellectual history of the period, taking its imaginative literature as a source of evidence, and the second is to bring various kinds of "contextual" matter to bear on illuminating how a significant literary imagination responded to a certain situation. (By speaking of "books of this type" I mean, of course, ruling out by definition a range of more complex ambitions.) This book certainly does not do the first of these; how far the second is a quite justifiable strategic choice and

how far a failure of execution it is hard to say, but it seems more generous to assume the former. Melchiori does not, for example, explore the tangled contemporary understandings of "Socialism", nor does she look at assumptions about political disorder, often drawn from the experience or the historical interpretation of episodes earlier in the century, which observers brought to their perceptions of these new threats. Nor – another possibility – is her book any kind of study of the workings of popular middle-brow culture: she does not deal with questions of readership or forms of publication, such as serialization, and she claims about the popularity or circulation of the novels she discusses. Indeed, in her final paragraph she suddenly quotes from Marie Corelli's *The Sorrows of Satan*, a work, she tells us, "which probably sold more copies in its day than all the other novels mentioned in this book added together".

It certainly seems more promising to regard Melchiori's book as a contribution to that branch of literary studies which speaks of the large interpretative rewards to be gathered by treating long-canonical works of literature in their "historical context". One way to bring out the extent to which something like this is the implied premise of the enquiry is to ask what difference it would have made to the point and interest of her book if the discussion of just two among the novels of the period had been omitted, but those two had been James's *The Princess Casanovissa* and Conrad's *The Secret Agent*. Their load-bearing centrality in the structure of the book is evident in Melchiori's constant reference to them, to the James in particular (although many of these references are of that inherently unsatisfactory speculative variety: "This may have provided a source for James's . . ."). It seems reasonable to ask, therefore, that her book return the favour and contribute something to our understanding of these two novels. This is certainly a demanding assignment; and perhaps it is not surprising that Melchiori does not seem to come very close to pulling it off. Let me try to indicate very briefly the grounds for this judgment by addressing her main discussion of *The Princess Casanovissa*.

In her view, James's novel perpetuated the already widespread tendency to: "conflate Anarchism and Socialism", an equation which could only encourage his readers to side with the forces of conservatism. She alleges that James makes Hyacinth Robinson, the character around whom *Bildung* the novel is constructed, "the mouthpiece of reaction", and that in general James "sacrifices credibility

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Frank quotes Freud's letter to his (then) fiancée as part of an attempt to provide a "psychoanalytic-phenomenological" perspective upon Dickens's "speculations upon the self". By examining a selection of the novels from *Dombey and Son* to *Edwin Drood*, he asks us to understand that Paul and Edith Dombey, David Copperfield, Esther Summerson, Pip, Charles Darnay, John Harmon and John Jasper are engaged in a common struggle to forge for themselves secure identities, based upon the recuperation of their fragmented, earlier selves by means of narrative. They are all, in other words, novelists *maquies*. We overhear them telling themselves their stories, the stories which confer meaning and coher-

ence upon their divided existences. This is, then, the fundamental Dickensian project: to recreate the "self" which is characteristically experienced as oppressed or alienated by its position within a specific society, a specific history, in such a way as to find freedom; but, unfortunately, this is a freedom perceived as beyond history – and so, inevitably, unrealizable. In time, time cannot be redeemed. As far as he goes, especially in relation to the openly autobiographical novels – *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations* – Frank is persuasive. These two novels do seem to rely on a notion of human beings as narrative beings: inveterate story-tellers who incorporate themselves into themselves in a vain pilgrimage which can never quite overcome the threatening, obdurate facts – like Magwitch's leg-iron, which Pip helps the convict saw off, but which returns as a weapon to smash down his unloving sister and irrevocably links him with criminality, even murder. The muted, unsatisfactory endings of both David's and Pip's tales suggest their inability to attain wholeness. It may be that, as Frank puts it, in a universe "no longer sustained by God's informing presence", the individual obligation to sustain oneself through an act of the imagination is doomed. But I am not convinced that God is so far withdrawn from Dickens's world.

Indeed, it seems to me precisely the point of *Little Dorrit* – largely ignored by Frank – that redemption is shown to be possible for its spiritually maimed hero, Arthur Clennam, and in

within the economy of the novel in order to put across his own views on the social question". (We may, in passing, wonder at the assumption that a writer of James's gifts would need to damage the economy of his creation in order to express a political conviction, even were it at all plausible that such a bleakly abstract and annunciatory purpose governed the writing of his novels.)

The general drift of this line of argument, or complaint, about the politically conservative hearing of *The Princess Casanovissa* is not altogether new, but however far it may seem to derive support from what we know of James's later political inclinations from other sources, as a characterization of this admittedly uneven but undeniably rich novel it has always seemed woefully inadequate. Melchiori's marshalling of her newspaper extracts and cross-references to other "conspiracy novels" does not make it seem any more compelling, and in the absence of any extended critical engagement with the complexities of James's distinctive concerns and manner of treatment it is hard to see how such additional "information" could have much purchase. She implies that it is a defect of the novel that there is "a certain vagueness about the details of [its] central conspiracy", but surely James had already largely preempted this criticism in his preface to the New York edition where he had insisted that it was precisely the insubstantial but darkly threatening quality of "just perceptible presences and general looming possibilities" which he wished to capture. It was the shadowy vagueness of anarchist organizations and aims which inspired that mixture of apprehension, bafflement and fascination which is evident in the contemporary response, and which James rendered so persuasively. If anything, the juxtaposition to James's novel of contemporary newspaper accounts of "dynamic conspiracies", accounts which were obviously long on speculation and short on facts, only serves to make his imaginative achievement here the more impressive.

But the larger question concerns the appropriateness of primarily appraising such a work in terms of the adequacy of its account of the available forms of radical political action. After all, despite its self-consciously Dickensian opening scenes, *The Princess Casanovissa* hardly presents itself as an exercise in descriptive sociology, and although Melchiori does not, of course, impute this ambition to it, it would be more reassuring if she seemed at all disturbed by the gap between the understanding, perhaps inevitably, coarse-grained categories of her political analysis and the delicate fictional material upon which they are de-

veloped. As always with James, motives and the shifting levels of self-awareness which accompany them form a central preoccupation of the writing, which explores some of the ways, mostly subterranean or unacknowledged, in which temperament, desire, situation and self-deception may combine in leading a character to adopt – or, less deliberately and more suggestively, to inhabit – a particular political identity. At this level, the novel provides, among other things, a marvellous delineation of one style of "radical chic". The Princess, to whose significance the title of the novel attests, embodies a set of motives which are, in both the literal and pejorative senses, "mixed" to a high degree; velleities abound, and the gaps between desires and professions are allowed to manifest themselves the more tellingly for also being part of her charm. If it is "reactionary" to perceive how a professed commitment to some form of political radicalism can spring from more than simply an unalloyed rational response to a set of "objective" conditions; then any really penetrating exercise of intelligence about the nature of motive will have to be so labelled, a denial of understanding which must ultimately be a disservice to any cause.

There is, of course, much more to be said about the matter than this; just as there are other aspects of the fiction of this period about which *Terrarium in the Late Victorian Novel* may be thought to supply real illumination. But Professor Melchiori's book is not unusual in allowing the provision of a highly selective "context" to do too much interpretative work: her misfortune perhaps lies in the fact that James is more evidently resistant to this summary handling than many authors, and we therefore feel the inadequacy of the rather than critical vocabulary of such historical studies the more keenly. Still, this may just be yet another reason to be grateful to him.

Volume Thirteen of the *Dickens Studies Annual: Essays on Victorian Fiction*, edited by Michael Tinko, Fred Kaplan and Edward Guillian (362pp., New York: AMS Press; available in the UK from Eurospan, £37.50, 0 404 18533 9), contains fifteen contributions, mostly concerning Dickens. But Lois Hughes's "History and Biography as Model for Narrative: James's *The Bostonians*, *The Princess Casanovissa*, and *The Tragic Muse*", and Louis James's, "The Rediscovery of the Monster – Fiction and Context in Recent Victorian Criticism: A guide to research"; Kirk H. Beetz provides a summary account in "Wilkie Collins Studies, 1972-83" and John Sutherland's essay is "John Macrone: Victorian publisher" (and Dickens's first).

terms which transcend the personal or socio-historical. Hence, for example, the powerfully contrasting metaphors of darkness and light which weave their way through the novel, suggesting both the gloomily imprisoned state of humanity and equally its hope for virtue, happiness and freedom, visualized as sunlight streaming across the awakening city, "bars of the prison of this lower world", yet "signs of the blessed later covenant" too.

Lawrence Frank's Dickens is "utterly romantic" in his emphasis upon the redeeming potential of the imagination. But Dickens was also intensely practical; and he used to insist, for example, that sanitary reform should and would precede the spiritual regeneration of the poor. One of the things that most impressed the novelist when he first visited America in 1842 was that, while "not the republic of my imagination", it was a place where the sick and needy were considerably provided for. This side of Dickens's interest in the countries he visited is ignored in Sidney P. Moss's humdrum and partial account, *Charles Dickens' Quarrel with America*. Better to turn again to the novelist's own *American Notes* (as he modestly called them); or to the impressionistic *Pictures from Italy* derived from his sojourn there and in France and Switzerland in 1844-5. The new firm of Granville, republishing both, have sensibly renounced scholarly trappings in favour of a good, clear and manageable format, based on the 1892 Chapman and Hall edition of these two classic travel books.

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Reeling and writing

Andrew Wawn

Britain's Literary Heritage: The original manuscript record Series One, Parts 1 to 3
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Britain's Literary Heritage, Harvester Press's major new microfilmed collection, promises to do for important manuscript collections rendered difficult of access by distance what the great Ann Arbor Michigan microfilm collection has long done for early printed books – namely, to bring essential materials of serious literary research within the compass of every university library (or, at least, those which are able to meet the considerable expenditure involved). The current range of this open-ended enterprise, the first instalments of which were issued in 1984, is already formidable: selections available or promised include medieval manuscripts from Cambridge University Library (forty-nine reels in Series One), with Chaucer, Langland, Gower and Hoccleve well represented; a rich array of Tudor to Restoration material from the Sloane and Additional collections in the British Library (fifty-three reels in Series One), with every level of literary competence finding expression; Virginia Woolf papers from Sussex University; William Morris material from the British Library (not mentioned in the catalogue). In addition, there are several series serving the interests of theatrical history: the Folger Shakespeare Library's collection of prompt books (eighty-six reels); the University of Kent's Frank Pottlingall collection of nineteenth-century theatrical documentation; archives of British Theatres Royal; sequences of nineteenth-century theatrical periodicals (twenty-three reels); and a unique set of plays submitted to R. B. Sheridan at Drury Lane between 1776 and 1812, along with important related correspondence.

The accompanying inventories, supplementing the standard printed catalogues of the re-

levant libraries, facilitate the identification of areas of general interest and particular items: that for the Folger prompt-books is particularly well organized and indexed; that for the Renaissance material, confronting an altogether more daunting task, has been prepared from the British Library handwritten Sloane catalogue, and is perfectly adequate in spite of occasional incompleteness or uncertainties of pagination or citation, as when a promised seventeenth-century epigram "On swimming" proves to be a rather more understandably stern attack "On swearing". Each reel identifies its contents at the start, but much frantic high-speed winding and rewinding may be avoided by organizing ready access to printed catalogues.

Within and between individual series and reels, there are countless opportunities for modification and realignment of critical perspectives and perceptions as, filtered through the frequently idiosyncratic priorities of commonplace book compilers and other collectors, the major and the seminal are excerpted and juxtaposed with the minor and the transient. The primary interest, for instance, of several *Centenary Tales* manuscripts included in the "Medieval Age" series is set in curious relief by the discovery of sections from the *Canon of Yeoman's Tale* among learned alchemical tracts in a sixteenth-century manuscript; and by the inclusion of an imperfect fifteenth-century single text of the *Tale of Melibee* among seventeenth-century theological treatises – the age more sympathetic to the earnestness of Chaucerian allegorical prose than to "Wades bote" and related "long and fabulous" matter.

Elsewhere in the Sloane collection, Sir Thomas Browne, stirred by the new curiosities of the Royal Society, corresponds earnestly with Icelandic ecclesiastics about the geography and antiquities of their distant land, while earlier in the seventeenth century, for a group of Oxford students, an "Iliad Boreale" meant penetrating no further than the northern fastnesses of Litterworth and Northampton. In-

stant attacks on Anabaptists rub shoulders with recipes for "Mrs Fenwyck's green oymment", a herbal preparation infused in butter, efficacious as a remedy "for the Bull". Major poems by Donne find company with several little-known Reformation treatises of the story of Jonah (well worth investigating), and with a number of fascinating texts relating to the state of the English language in the seventeenth century: a dialect poem dense enough to bring a smile to the face of William Barnes; notes for a projected Thesaurus; and doggedly accumulated lists of "words sounded alike but spelled otherwise".

The theatre historian would scarcely know where to start, confronted with the teeming resources of several sequences of dramatic materials. The Folger collection – prompt-books, souvenir prompt-books, memorial books, stage-manager workbooks, rehearsal prompt-books, study-books, acting edition workbooks, cue books, public reading versions, records of production – provides, innumerable vivid glimpses of traditions of performance from the seventeenth century on to Kemble, then to Kean, Henry Irving, and eventually John Barrymore. Occasional items may seem of the most modest interest; but when, for instance, the actor playing Richard III in Chicago in 1874 is reminded to rise from his Act Five dreams "like a man coming out of hell, dragging his dream with him, sinking to his knees, begging with a shriek then softening to a shuddering whisper", then criticism is silenced.

Theatre periodicals are a strikingly rich seam. Invariably painstaking and sometimes penetrating critical essays provide insights into, for example, the changing traditions of Shylock performance – from Kean's burlesque, through the fortiness of Henry Irving, to contemporary German practice. Other journals have a more ephemeral appeal, but it would be a study-hardened browser who could not enjoy a trade paper such as *The Stage Director*, whose June 1907 issue identifies the

talents of "Kelly and Gillette. Fun on the stage", or "Harden: The King of the King", or "Chicco, King of the King". Available immediately, or the more distant "Florence Schubertha. Fully booked in 1908". One can follow week by week the long praise accorded to the technological elation of the Oldham Hippodrome, the scope, or note the cost of a new telephone and Autograph, "the electrical machine" (£170); or marvel at the "Julian Mack creates a new genre of merriment with his doomy doom Grand Theatre, Hanley".

The social historian might also be interested in suffragette-related acts advertised in the light cast on early twentieth-century Anglo-Irish relations by the Manchester's Theatre, Bootle, in October 1908, when, offended by "Hibernian" performances from the stage, the Liverpool Federation of Irish Societies arrested a subsequent performance, and the approval of the editor, J. W. W. W.

William Morris scholar will find the library visit to analyse the collaborative process of the Morris and Burne-Jones partnership between Morris and Burne-Jones, and what was printed; and the frequently reminded that Morris's time-decorating the marriage of "The Lygia" with asserted "The Lygia" as it drove him to write down the

The Harvester enterprise will have existing areas of research and may fine new ones; it will ensure that fact libraries can be prepared to the scholarly application of the

Dennis Walder

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33pp.

Frank, 102 Islington High Street, London N10 2JF, £12.95 (paperback, £5.95) each. 0 80214 01 5 and 0 948214 03 1

Lawrence Frank, in *Charles Dickens and the Romantic Self*, takes a comic moment in *Our Friend* to suggest a paradigmatic comic in Dickens: Silas Wegg, anxiously purging his amputated leg among Mr Venus's readers ("You that love . . ."), the word "infection" also takes its dramatic sense: in "beauty's infection", the beloved and the power of the poem coalesce.

Maule and Sheen take me to task for old-fashioned obsessions with "fashion" and "style", but they are right: the loom as English literature continues to be divided in author-sized chunks, and we must decide whether certain material belongs to one chunk or another. But such power does not preclude other forms of criticism. For, all we can do is apply the same rule: "Shall I die?" that we apply elsewhere. Evidence for this poem must be more (and no less) sceptically than evidence for most of the poems tradition-ally in the Shakespeare canon: if they go. In the current state of our knowledge, "Shall I die?" must still be included in editions of Shakespeare's works which label it "Complete".

Stefan Collini

Barbara Arnett Melchiori
Terrarium in the Late Victorian Novel
33pp. Croom Helm. £19.95.

0 359 3883 8

Barbara Arnett Melchiori's book contains eight chapters: the first two survey some new reports of the oswald threatening acts of monarchs and other dynasties in England and Europe in the 1880s and the 1890s, and the remaining six provide summary accounts of a variety of novels dealing with this theme published in England during these years, classified in terms of novels dealing with Penian out-comes, and so on. It would give a misleading impression of the book to say that it is primarily concerned with a sustained argument, but Professor Melchiori returns more than once to what she regards as the facile equation made, for the most part implicitly, in this literature between anarchist violence and Socialist or similar social protest. In her view, this equation, when made in the press (or at least in *The Times* and the *Pall Mall Gazette*, to which she confines herself) and reinforced in the novels, ultimately served to obscure the cogency of the non-violent forms of social criticism and hence contributed to the maintenance of what she calls "established values". She does not deploy the vocabulary of any elaborated theory of "ideology" to make this point, the prominence of which I am in danger of exaggerating; mainly she summarizes the novels.

So far, so respectable; or at least familiar. Melchiori has noticed something which has not been noticed before (in that special academic bubble of "noticed", meaning "had a book written about it"); she has read a lot of what are, with a few notable exceptions, evidently pretty dry and unrewarding novels; and she has gathered her accounts of them in a clear and competent way.

Speaking very roughly, books of this type usually offer, in addition to various minor sermons, to do one of two things for us: the first is to employ an episode in the intellectual history of the period, taking its imaginative literature as a source of evidence, and the second is to bring various kinds of "contextual" matter to bear on illuminating how a significant literary imagination responded to a certain situation. (By speaking of "books of this type" I mean, of course, ruling out by definition a range of more complex ambitions.) This book certainly does not do the first of these; how far the second is a quite justifiable strategic choice and

how far a failure of execution it is hard to say, but it seems more generous to assume the former. Melchiori does not, for example, explore the tangled contemporary understandings of "Socialism", nor does she look at assumptions about political disorder, often drawn from the experience or the historical interpretation of episodes earlier in the century, which observers brought to their perceptions of these new threats. Nor – another possibility – is her book any kind of study of the workings of popular middle-brow culture: she does not deal with questions of readership or forms of publication, such as serialization, and she claims about the popularity or circulation of the novels she discusses. Indeed, in her final paragraph she suddenly quotes from Marie Corelli's *The Sorrows of Satan*, a work, she tells us, "which probably sold more copies in its day than all the other novels mentioned in this book added together".

It certainly seems more promising to regard Melchiori's book as a contribution to that branch of literary studies which speaks of the large interpretative rewards to be gathered by treating long-canonical works of literature in their "historical context". One way to bring out the extent to which something like this is the implied premise of the enquiry is to ask what difference it would have made to the point and interest of her book if the discussion of just two among the novels of the period had been omitted, but those two had been James's *The Princess Casanovissa* and Conrad's *The Secret Agent*. Their load-bearing centrality in the structure of the book is evident in Melchiori's constant reference to them, to the James in particular (although many of these references are of that inherently unsatisfactory speculative variety: "This may have provided a source for James's . . ."). It seems reasonable to ask, therefore, that her book return the favour and contribute something to our understanding of these two novels. This is certainly a demanding assignment; and perhaps it is not surprising that Melchiori does not seem to come very close to pulling it off. Let me try to indicate very briefly the grounds for this judgment by addressing her main discussion of *The Princess Casanovissa*.

In her view, James's novel perpetuated the already widespread tendency to: "conflate Anarchism and Socialism", an equation which could only encourage his readers to side with the forces of conservatism. She alleges that James makes Hyacinth Robinson, the character around whom *Bildung* the novel is constructed, "the mouthpiece of reaction", and that in general James "sacrifices credibility

